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June 14, 1887.

Vol. XX.

\$2.50
a Year.PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.Price,
5 Cents.

No. 516.



OR, Five Points Phil's Menagerie.

BY JO PIERCE,
(Of the New York Detective Force.)

CHAPTER I.

A STARTLING SURPRISE.

"Isn't it about time for that Express train?"
"Yes, but you needn't look for it right away."

"Late?"

"Smash-up on the road. The Express run into something and went all to pieces. Complete wreck!"

The questioner reeled back against the depot wall, his face turning pale. His expression was that of a man who had received a terrible blow, and for the time he had no words of reply at

"STEP IN," SHE DIRECTED. FIVE POINTS PHIL OBEYED, AND THEN STOOD AMAZED AT WHAT HE SAW.

command. His informant looked at him more closely.

"Had you friends on the Express?"

"Yes."

The reply was in a husky voice.

"Then I am sorry that I spoke so hastily, for my statement was exaggerated. I spoke in general, rather than definite, terms. There has been an accident, and the cars were shattered more or less, but the dispatch says that no one was seriously injured. Sorry I alarmed you, sir; pray pardon me."

The late questioner's face cleared, and he managed to smile. He was one of several persons who were waiting in the Grand Central Depot, New York, for the belated train.

He was a man of about fifty years, tall and slender of form, with a dark face, black hair, and black side-whiskers. Judging from his expression, he might have been a misanthrope. He had a severe expression—that of a man who would assuredly tell you, if you said anything whatever on the subject, that this world was a hard, unsympathetic, poor sort of a world. He was well dressed, however, and would have passed as a very respectable-looking man.

Recovering from the shock so thoughtlessly given him, he proceeded to make inquiries concerning the Express. Learning that it would arrive in about one hour, he sat down in the waiting-room and devoted a part of his time to an evening paper.

His mind, however, appeared to wander—perhaps he was still worrying about the Express train.

Nevertheless, that train arrived in due time, according to the new arrangement, and the people began to pour out. He had taken a prominent position, and was watching eagerly. Suddenly his face brightened, and he moved forward to one of the late passengers.

It was a very pretty girl of eighteen years, neatly dressed, refined and attractive. In one of her hands she carried a small traveling-bag, and a still smaller, coquettish-looking basket of colored strands. A charming girl she surely was, yet a close observer could have told by her apparel, and complexion, that her home was not in New York.

Evidently she was from the country.

The man moved quickly to her side.

"My dear Stella, I am delighted to see you."

"And I am even more pleased to see you."

Her face evinced her sincerity, yet the kiss which they exchanged was not particularly warm. Seth Maudston was Stella's uncle, but their acquaintance had been only nominal, and marked warmth was not to be expected.

"I have been terribly worried about that accident," Maudston continued.

"And I have been terribly frightened by that accident," she replied, assuming a light air. "You know that I am not accustomed to traveling, and I thought it a rude experience, but no harm was done, and—I am in New York!"

"Yes, and under my care, at least. Rest assured, your troubles are over. But we won't stay here. I have a cab outside—let us go to it at once."

They left the depot, and proceeded to a cab which stood apart from those belonging to the less fortunate drivers. This particular vehicle was engaged, and John could sit on the box and calmly watch his brethren wrangle for customers.

"Here is our carriage, Stella. I have purchased a painting this evening, and put it inside, which leaves scarcely room for both of us. You won't mind if I ride beside the driver, will you?"

"Certainly not," the girl answered, though she would much rather have had his company.

"Don't slip in getting in—let me take your baggage. There you are, all safe. Now, I'll mount beside the driver. It will not be an agreeable seat, but it will do very well."

He closed the cab door, and Stella Fielding settled down for the ride. The picture before alluded to was large, and did take up considerable room, but she found space enough for herself and the few articles she carried.

The cab moved away, passing through Forty-second street to Third avenue. Then it proceeded down-town. Stella sat in the dusky interior and thoughtfully watched the flashing lights and illuminated shops by the way, but, by accident or design, never released her hold on the parti-colored basket she carried. The traveling-bag lay unheeded on the seat, but she held to the basket in a way which would have caused an observer to think that it was unusually valuable.

Suddenly there was a jolt, jar and shock. The cab and another vehicle, in attempting to

move through the narrow space left by a passing street-car, had collided. No damage had been done to either, but there was the usual amount of loud talk and recrimination on the part of the drivers.

They separated, and moved on, before a crowd had time to gather.

At the moment of the accident, however, a boy of about fifteen years had been just opposite them, on the sidewalk. This astute youth had anticipated the collision, and the result made him smile broadly, for some reason.

Suddenly his smile vanished, and a look of wonder took its place. He stared until the vehicles went on, and then, thrusting his hands deeply into his pockets, exclaimed:

"Criminy! ef that ain't a queer go, my name ain't Tim Thistle!"

What had he seen to surprise him? None of the other observers had been similarly affected, and it seemed that his sharp eyes had seen something which had escaped the notice of all others.

What was it?

Tim Thistle did not see fit to explain, but as he walked on, he audibly observed:

"Ef natur' sometimes does that way, I'm glad she made an exception in my case."

Stella had lost her fear after the first shock, and she smiled quietly as they went ahead. Collisions seemed to be the order of the day, or, rather evening, with her. Finally the cab stopped again, and, after a pause, Mr. Maudston opened the door and looked in.

"Getting weary, Stella?"

"Not particularly."

"We are nearly home. Yonder is my grocery store—the place where I trade, I mean—and I have sent the cab-driver in to give an order for me. I thought that I would not leave you, considering—well, you know why!"

There was a perceptible significance in the last words, and Stella quickly answered:

"I understand, and you are both kind and thoughtful."

"You have the basket all safe?"

"Oh! yes."

The driver returned.

"They'll send the coffee early in the morning, sir," he announced, addressing Maudston.

"All right. Now let us end the journey."

Mr. Maudston again mounted to the box; the cab went on; and in a few minutes they drew up before a plain, but very respectable-looking house on Seventeenth street. This was Maudston's home, and he proceeded to escort Stella in. There they were met by her uncle's wife; a slight, pale woman. She may be described in a few words, from the standpoint of their social world. She was honorable, conscientious and gentle, but lacking in force of character—terribly lacking, in that respect.

She was considered as being as nearly a non-entity as a human being could be.

She kindly, gently welcomed Stella, and, in a few minutes, all went to the supper-table. Curiously enough, Stella only laid down the fancy basket, when removing her wraps, and even then she watched it jealously. When she ate, it stood on the table beside her; when they went to the parlor, afterward, she took it with her.

Then, for the first time, Maudston gave it close attention.

"You had better take out your jewels and place them in the safe, at once," he said. "The basket can now be dispensed with; it has done its work well, but its work is past."

The cover of the basket was secured with a spring. This the girl touched, and the cover flew up. A piece of cloth, which seemed to cover something neatly, lay exposed to view. If any one had been watching Stella at that moment he would have been surprised to see the strange, startled expression which flashed over her face.

She caught the cloth and flung it aside. A second cloth was below, rolled in a loose ball. She hurriedly opened this, her hands trembling and her face growing paler, but as it spread out without revealing anything in the way of contents, a gasping cry escaped her lips.

"What's the matter, Stella?" Maudston asked, in evident surprise.

"The jewels are gone!"

"Gone?"

"Merciful Heaven, yes!"

"What do you mean? How can that be?"

"I don't know; I only know they are gone."

"Then you have met a pickpocket, after all."

"Impossible! The basket has not left my hands since I put the jewels in at home, and no one could have taken them out."

"It don't seem that you could have left them at home," and Maudston looked blankly into her anguished face.

"Nor did I leave them. How could I leave them? I put them into the basket myself, and, as I said before, it has not left my hands since."

"You forget the railroad accident."

"I held to the basket even then."

"Are you sure? Possibly you left it on the cushion a moment, being excited, and—"

"I did not leave it an instant. I repeat that it has not left my hands at all."

"Yet the jewels are gone."

"Yes."

Stella spoke brokenly, and then, woman-like, dropped into a chair and began to weep pitifully.

It was a serious matter to her. She had come to New York to sell these jewels, and the proceeds were to go toward paying off a mortgage on her father's homestead. Mr. Fielding was old and broken in health; misfortune had overtaken the family, and they had reached the point where the family jewels must be sold, or the homestead leave their hands.

The jewels had been expected to bring three thousand dollars, though worth more than that. Fielding had once been a man of means; these valuables had been all that was left of their former affluence—and now they were gone!

Was it any wonder that Stella wept bitterly? She was young and brave, and felt capable of enduring a good deal, but she had believed that the loss of their home would prove her poor old father's death-blow. She had come to New York with high hopes—she was now in the depths of despair.

"This is most extraordinary," muttered Maudston.

"It is terrible!" sobbed the girl.

"Reflect, my dear. Can't you fix the moment of the robbery? Perhaps the fringe of a woman's shawl, or the button of a man's coat, caught in your own garments—she, or he, apologized politely, and then went away?"

"Nothing of the kind occurred."

"Or some person occupied the other half of the seat with you, and dropped a coat or wrap over the basket?"

"No, no; I sat entirely alone, and nothing was put over the basket by any one."

"Or, when you were leaving the car, some one pressed against you, apologized politely, and—"

"No such thing happened."

"Then I am at a loss. These, and other tricks, are practiced by sharpers, but I am, as I said, baffled. Did you open the basket at all?"

"Not once. That would have been contrary to your directions."

"True."

Mr. Maudston stared at the empty basket a moment in silence, and then sadly added:

"They are gone, sure enough."

"Yes, and oh! Uncle Seth, this will kill my father!" sobbed the girl.

"Great heavens! no—it must not; it shall not!" Maudston energetically declared. "Stella, give me charge of this matter, and don't write the mournful news home. We have detectives here who are as keen as briars, and one of them shall at once be put on the track. I will gladly bear all the expense. I know just the man—a private detective, named Badger. The name is appropriate, too, for he is a very Vidocq when on a case."

"Do you really think he will find them?"

"If mortal man can do it, Badger will. Yes, I do think he can find them. He'll see right into this matter, Badger will."

Mr. Maudston spoke so confidently that hope returned to Stella's heart. Her face brightened a little, and she gratefully replied:

"You are very kind, indeed, Uncle Seth, and it shall be as you say. My father's life, I believe, depends on the recovery of the jewels."

CHAPTER II.

A BURGLARY IS PLANNED.

"GREAT ginger! how's this fur an ad.? I've seen peccoliar ones afore, but this sorter claps the climax. It does, assoordly!"

"Anybody want ter give-away a million dollars?"

"Ef they does, it ain't apperient on the sarface. Open yer ears arnd listen, my b'loved contemporary, arnd you shall hear. Foller me closs'tly!"

The speaker cleared his throat, and read as follows:

"WANTED!"

"A boy, fourteen or fifteen years of age, to run errands and make himself useful. Good home guaranteed. He must be agreeable, polite, honest, willing, gentle and fond of cats."

Then followed the address.

The boy who had read this advertisement, and

the boy who had listened, both broke into a hearty laugh.

"Fond o' cats!" repeated the reader. "Wal, now, I'd like ter know what *that's* got to do with runnin' errands."

"Wal, I think de facts are like dis: Boys who don't like cats might stop by de way to stone dem, an' so nct git around quick. How's dat?"

"Tartar Tim, you're a philosopher, ef yer name is Tim Thistle; that's what *you* be; but yer explanation don't seem ter fill a long-felt warnt. It don't strike me ez likely."

"Then what is de facts?"

"Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things; that's all I kin say o' this pecooliar affair. Hol' on! See the name signed ter it. 'Apply ter Dorothea Sykes.' This may shed a luminous light on the case. Ef she ain't in disguise, Dorothea is a woman o' the gentler sex. Now, women like cats; thar's an affinity atween them, bein' as how they are much alike, the two be. Both is soft, arnd gentle, arnd pooty, when calm arnd satisfied; but great ginger! how they will scratch, arnd make the fur fly, when they git their mad up!"

The speaker wagged his head knowingly, while Tim Thistle remarked:

"Guess you're wal posted."

"I'm an authority on women arnd cats, I be, my b'loved contemporary. Great ginger, yes! Go down ter Paradise Park arnd ax 'em how 'tis. Yis, ax 'em jest how Five Points Phil stands in *that* respec?"

The two boys were seated in a room of a house on Macdougall street. It was a plain room, and they were plain boys. In outward appearance they were somewhat alike, being small, compact and hardy, but there were some marked points of dissimilarity.

Tim Thistle, the street Tartar, was the possessor of hair which certainly must be called red, and his garments were getting ragged. Five Points Phil was brown-haired, and his clothes, though never expensive, were whole. Another point of difference was noticeable in their faces. Tim looked bright, keen and honest, but his face was a practical one. To the qualities first named Phil added a romantic turn of mind, fondness for humorous fancies, and disposition to occasionally soar in mid-air, so to speak, though always practical when necessary.

In accomplishing an object both would be shrewd, cool and sensible, as well as persistent, but Phil would see possibilities which would escape Tim's notice, and better adapt himself to circumstances and people of different character.

Both were evidently boys of limited means and humble life, but their honesty was beyond question.

"Wal, what's de next ad.?" asked the Tartar.

"Never mind the next. This 'ere one sticks in my crop, like a toad in a snake's stummick. Tartar Timothy, I've a good mind ter arnswer this ad."

"You?"

"Assoreedly."

"You don't need ter work. Solomon Richmore gives you all de money you want."

"Sartain, arnd sends me ter school, but school's out now, arnd why shouldn't I git a job arnd sweat my brow fur my daily bread?"

"Mebbe ye couldn't get de job."

"Mebbe I could. Why not? I arnswer all the terms o' the ad. I'm agreeable ez a pooty gal; perlite ez a dancin'-master; arnd gentle ez a perliceman with a big dinner in tow."

"But do ye like cats?"

"Like cats? My b'loved contemporary, ef thar is any one thing I jest adore, it's cats. I won't go ter operays, arnd pay fibulous prices, while I kin hang onter the winder arnd hear a hull band o' cats in a serenade."

"You throwed an ink-bottle at dem, last night."

"Assoreedly. But why? Tim Thistle, I am a evolutionary, I am, arnd one ov my pet schemes is ter l'arn cats ter write. I throwed an ink-bottle at them last night; this evenin' I'll heave a stub pen at 'em, ef I hev ter buy a bran new one."

"A few cobble-stones would be a h'ape better," replied Tim practically. "I don't see ye goin' ter visit de ledy—phat's her name?—Dorothea Sykes?"

"Dorothea Sykes is her name, my b'loved contemporary—D. Sykes—I mean, Sykes—with no esquire onter it."

Phil had risen and deliberately put on his hat.

"Where are ye goin'?" Tim asked.

"Goin' ter see D. Sykes!"

"Be ye, really?"

"Ef you don't b'lieve me, foller arnd see. I s'pect she's a millionaire, arnd ef she is, 'tain't

right ter keep her hankerin' fur a boy that's fond o' cats. Timothy, farewell! We'll meet ag'in in a few hours, but I *must* know what that ad. means."

Out went Five Points Phil, while the street Tartar looked after him in undisguised wonder.

"Never seen a boy loike him afore. He's got a hi'd on him loike a champagne bottle, but ef thar's anybody wid a better heart, I've niver met him. Wonder what sort ave a time he'll hev? He'll talk me deaf whin he gits back."

An amused smile lighted up Tartar Tim's face. He and Phil were good friends, and though he wondered at his companion's queer ways, he liked him well, and often helped in many enterprises projected by him.

"Hallo!" suddenly added Tim; "I ain't told Phil about what I saw last evenin', whin the two carriages ran into aich ither on Third aveny. Mustn't forgit that—it'll interest Phil a good bit."

And the speaker fell into deep thought on the subject.

At the time of the foregoing interview, two men were holding an important conversation in the house next to that where Phil and Tim made their quarters.

These men were named Leonidas Palgrave and Jed Jackley. Palgrave, the tenant of the room, was a tall, well-dressed man of about sixty years, and as he was certainly intelligent, he would have passed for a gentleman and good citizen to the casual view, had he not possessed peculiar, furtive eyes. With a close student of human nature, those eyes would have hurt Palfrey.

Jed Jackley could never have passed as a gentleman. He was coarse and ignorant, and, though he tried to dress well, he chose such flashy garments that all good effect was lost. Mr. Jackley, no doubt, had his friends, but others would not want to be careless with their watches when he was around.

"I've called you here on business, Jed," said Palgrave, opening the interview.

"S'posed you did. Come right down ter hardpan. Got another job?"

"Yes."

"Dangerous?"

"Quite the contrary, I think."

"Much money in it?"

"A good bit, I think."

"Bank?"

"No; private house."

"That's my sort."

Jackley had poured in his questions rapidly, and had not seemed very much pleased until he heard Palgrave's last statement. Then he settled back with a contented smile.

"I've my eye on a house whereof the only inmates are two old women, one of whom is a servant. The mistress of the house is rich, and has about as much worldly wisdom as a child of six years. She has lived in the city all her life, but is as ignorant as a country woman; in fact, she's as green as grass, and just the kind of a hairpin to keep lots of money about the house."

"Cap, you fill me with joy!"

"Glad of it."

"Who is this darling dame?"

"Her name is Dorothea Sykes, and she lives on Nineteenth street, near Third avenue."

"Dear Dorothea! I long to get ter see her!" quoth Jed, in his tenderest voice.

"You may get taken."

"What odds, if it be by Dorothea?"

"I appreciate your humor, but let us come to business. I want this game to succeed, as it is partly done to satisfy an old grudge."

"How can you have a grudge ag'in' sech an innercent chap as the old woman?"

Palgrave frowned.

"Don't get too inquisitive, Jed. I knew Miss Sykes in the old days—before she was a fossil; before I was—"

"Captain Tiger."

"Exactly; or, in other words, before she grew so unsophisticated, and before I became such a hopeless villain."

Palgrave leaned back, and for a few moments his face was grave, almost melancholy.

"Whoever likened life to a game of chess knew what he was talking about. Did you ever watch two master chess-players handle the pieces on the board? Finally one of those players makes a false move. He may discover it at once, or only until the game ends. Suppose he sees it early, and tries to retrieve his position. He fights desperately—perhaps for hours—but fights in vain. That wrong move ruined his chances. Life is like chess, and a single false move often ruins one's career."

The speaker paused, started, laughed harshly.

"What! is this Captain Tiger, moralizing?"

he sarcastically added. "Wonders will never cease, and the man who has been a king of thieves and swindlers for years, may yet turn parson."

Jed Jackley's gaze had never wandered from Palgrave's face.

"You're a queer bloke, Cap!" he observed.

"Thanks, my dear Jedediah. Now to business, and let me tell you how to enter Dorothea Sykes's house. This enterprise must not fail, for I am sure there is boodle in it. The old woman is rich—and we want to be."

Conversation was resumed and continued until Palgrave had fully explained the scheme. Just when the burglary was to take place was uncertain, but it would not be many nights later.

They were old hands at the business, and many a New Yorker had had occasion to regret Captain Tiger's existence. That gentleman, however, had never graced the inside of a cell. While common rogues were caught and punished, he went on quietly, planning crime after crime, as much unmolested by law as though he was the most honest man in the American metropolis.

Jed Jackley had known him several years, but, on this occasion, thoughts were in Jed's mind which had never been there before. Palgrave's bit of moralizing had set his companion's sluggish wits at work, also, and the curiosity he had always felt in regard to his superior became keener.

He believed that "Palgrave" was as much assumed name as was "Captain Tiger." While the leader's fertile brain planned crime after crime, he had always kept himself apart from his men. They went to him when he summoned them, always going to his room—and his quarters were often moved—and there he told them what to do and how to do it.

That was all they knew about him, but Jed Jackley was anxious to know more.

He believed that Palgrave led a double life, and aspired to learn his secret and make use of it.

"Remember," said the captain, at parting, "you are to use unusual care in this case."

"I'll do it."

"And don't harm Miss Sykes."

"Not a bit on't."

"That's all. Now you can go."

Jed went slowly out of the house.

"That's all, is it?" he muttered. "Wal, I ain't so sure of that. I feel a hankerin' to know jest who Captain Tiger is. Be I ter obey him in the dark, year after year, an' be content? He runs no risk; I put my head in jeopardy ev'ry time. This thing has growed stale, Cap'n Tiger, an' now I perpose ter diskiver jest who you be. Ef I can l'arn that, I reckon you an' me will make a new bargain, an' you won't be my master an' lord any longer!"

CHAPTER III.

TARTAR TIM'S ADVENTURE.

WHEN Jed Jackley reached the street he saw a small boy leaning against the lamp-post not far away. Jed saw that he was somewhat ragged and evidently poor; also, that he had a bright, keen face. Struck with a sudden idea, he went up to the young stranger.

"Hullo, boy!" he said.

"Hullo!" was the matter-of-fact reply.

"What's yer name?"

"Tim Thistle, or Tartar Tim fer short."

"Ain't that a ruther peculiar name?"

"Very common 'round hyar," answered Tim; "Folks says I growed up in de street loike a thistle, so de name fits, don't it?"

"I believe it does, by George! You look sharp, an' I reckon you'd be ez safe ter handle ez a thistle, ef you got yer dander up above par. Reg'lar Tartar, too, I should say."

"Now you've hit it. I've been called Tim Thistle, the Tartar, ever since I was de size ave that," and the boy illustrated by holding one hand on a level with his hip.

"Boy," said Jed, suddenly, "do you want ter make some money?"

"Who don't?" was the practical reply.

"Ef I hire ye ter do an honest job, will ye do it wal, keep mum, l'arn all ye kin, an' then report ter me?"

"Ef ye hire me—yes."

"Wal, in that house thar is a man I want ter know more about, an' ef you'll foller him, an' see whar he lives—nothin' more—I'll pay ye well. But he may expect ter be follered, an' you'll need ter be sly ez a weasel."

"I'm yer man!" Tim promptly announced.

"Good!"

Jed then gave an elaborate description of Pal-

grave, and repeated his injunction of caution with great earnestness and distinctness. He knew that Palgrave was sharp, and as he had been running a race with law so long, it was not likely that he would move about blindly and give every stupid fellow an easy chance to run him down. Plainly "Captain Tiger" would use skill, and Tartar Tim must do the same if he expected to accomplish his work.

"I'll tell ye jest what I expect," said Jed, in conclusion. "I b'lieve that the man, ez he seems hyar, is in disguise; an' I expect him ter go ter some house, lay aside his disguise, an' come out a diff'rent man entirely. How'll you recognize him then?"

"Onc't let me look at de chap," replied Tim, growing interested, "an' I'll know him ag'in. He may change his face an' hair an' shape o' body, but there's blissed few men hev two ways av walkin'. I'll spot de feller by his gait."

Jed looked at the "Tartar" in admiration.

"You've got a long head!" he declared.

"Don't know ez it's longer than de average, but I've had to use it a heap—it may be."

"Well, do this work an' bring me word ez I said, an' you shall be paid ev'ry cent I promised. I'm off now; don't let the chap slip ye ef you kin help it."

So saying Mr. Jackley moved briskly away. Tim Thistle looked after him with the thoughtful expression peculiar to his face.

"What've I stumbled on now? Ef looks go fur annything, dat chap is a rough an' sharper. How about de man he wants me ter dog? Ef he's decent, I'm not gom' ter give p'int to dat feller; not much! But I reckon they're birds av a feather—prob'ly pals, an' one wants de other spotted. Ef dat's it—I'll see!"

Tim lounged around quietly for half an hour.

Then Leonidas Palgrave came out.

The Tartar recognized him, but showed his natural shrewdness at once. Without seeming to take any notice of Palgrave, he watched him out of the corner of his eye and stood ready for action. The burglar chief looked attentively around, and then sauntered northward.

Tartar Tim was in no haste to follow, but at what he deemed the proper time, crossed the street and moved in the same direction in a way which indicated that he had no serious thought in the world.

Palgrave went quietly along until he reached Washington Square, which he crossed diagonally, and then, proceeding through Waverley Place, walked up Broadway to Astor Place, through which he moved in the same deliberate way.

His course was a natural one for a pedestrian, yet Tim Thistle began to feel dissatisfied. Why it was so he could not have told, but the impression was strong in his mind that all his care was being thrown away. His brief view of Palgrave's face had convinced him that he was a resolute, crafty man, and the ease with which he was allowing himself to be followed, *without appearing to know it*, impressed the boy spy as suspicious.

Was he right or wrong?

Still Palgrave went serenely on; still followed the Tartar.

Two or three more blocks were passed, and then Palgrave turned and came back. Ordinarily there would have been nothing suspicious in this, and his movements were natural enough, and Tim tried to believe that nothing was wrong.

He had no time to secrete himself, and as flight would have betrayed all, he paused before the nearest window and began looking at the wares there displayed with feigned attention. As this was only a saloon, and the wares some dingy old bottles, the view was not very interesting, but the artifice was well enough.

Palgrave walked quietly back. Tim Thistle was watching him secretly, but there was no sign that the man noticed him even casually.

Appearances are deceptive, however.

Captain Tiger reached Tim's side, still looking straight ahead, but at the moment when he seemed about to pass by, his hand suddenly shot out, seized the boy by the arm, gave him a jerk and a push, and then—the Tartar was inside the saloon, the prisoner of Captain Tiger!

All this had been so craftily, quickly, resistlessly done that Tim could not lift a hand in opposition, and when he was finally allowed to pause, he knew that he was in a bad fix.

The saloon was a low, miserable place, where dirt and squalor reigned supreme, and the two men who occupied it were filthy, liquor-bloated creatures of the lowest order. Captain Tiger flashed a look around and, seeing that no one else was present, suddenly drew a revolver and thrust it close to the prisoner's head.

"Silence, you young bound!" he said, sternly. "Utter one cry of alarm, and I will shoot!"

"I've not yelled, hev I?" retorted the Tartar, with surprising coolness.

"No, and you had better not. Higgins, open the door!"

"See hyar," remonstrated Tim, "I'd like ter know de meanin' ave this? Why be I 'saulted so? I'll hev ye know I am well up in de law, an' this is a case ave 'saut an' battery. I'll thank ye ter let me go out, an' ef ye don't do it, I'll hev a eop arter yez."

"To chaos with your 'cop!' Don't you dare oppose me!"

Palgrave glared at the prisoner ominously, but Tim, though he saw that he was helpless for the time being, was not as much frightened as the burglar captain wished.

Higgins, one of the barkeepers, had opened a door at the end of the room, and Palgrave pointed to it and added:

"Go in there!"

"What for?"

"Never mind. Go on!"

The speaker stamped his foot angrily on the floor, and then, seeing that Tim did not start, grasped the boy by the arm and forced him that way. The revolver was also held against the captive's head, and the Tartar found himself perfectly helpless. He yielded to the inevitable, and was conducted up a rickety stairway to a room on the next floor.

This was even a worse place than the one below. A table and half a dozen cheap chairs comprised the furniture; the floor was unswept, and remnants of cigars mingled with dirt in lavish profusion.

Captain Tiger pushed his prisoner into a chair.

"Sit there!" he ordered.

"Sence ye ask me so politely, I will. It's not in me heart ter refuse yer invitation," Tim coolly replied.

The burglar chief fixed a stern glance upon the speaker's keen, composed face.

"Boy, who are you?"

"Dennis Rooks is me name."

"Who told you to dog me?"

Tim made a start, and affected surprise.

"Phat's that?" he asked.

"Don't play the innocent dodge. You followed me all the way from Macdougall street. Now, I want to know who set you on. Who hired you to spy upon me?"

Tim Thistle had seen enough to believe that his life was in danger, and he did not hesitate to turn from the path of veracity. He stoutly denied all that Palgrave asserted, insisting that no one had hired him, and that he had not intentionally followed his accuser.

"Why will you lie to me?" snarled Tiger, glaring more savagely than before.

"See hyar," demanded Tim, "what kin I do ter please yez? Shall I go on an' till what's not so? What good would it do you or me? It's de truth I've told yez, an' don't ye forgit it."

"Do you know Jed Jackley?"

"Niver heard ave him."

"I believe you lie."

"Bel'ave what ye please," sulkily replied the Tartar.

"You are *very* kind, and I am 'pleased' to believe the truth. You dogged me; somebody hired you to do it; and I am going to have a clear confession before you leave here."

"You'll k'ape me hyar until de world ends, then."

"You've got grit, haven't you? A good quality sometimes, but villainously bad when brains are lacking to back it up."

"Have you tried it?" retorted the street spy.

"Silence, you scoundrel! Do you know, I have a good mind to blow your brains out?"

"Ye jest intimated that I hadn't anny."

"Sharp as a brier, aren't you? That won't help you, however. Do you see this revolver?"

"Yis."

"It's a good weapon, well loaded. Now, I want to know whether you prefer to confess, or have me shoot you?"

"Ef I had annything ter confess, I'd do it. But I haven't; ye're on de wrong track."

Captain Tiger suddenly reached over, grasped Tim, forcibly by the arm, and thrust the revolver against his temple.

"Now will you talk?" he demanded.

"Can't tell what I don't know, boss."

Tim's voice was steady, and his face remarkably calm, though it must be confessed that he was far from being at ease. One touch of Palgrave's finger would send a bullet through his head, and the captain certainly looked fierce enough. But the weapon was suddenly removed.

"Boy, I'll give you five dollars to speak out."

"I'd like de money, but I can't till what I don't know."

Palgrave gnawed fiercely at his lip for a moment, and then angrily added:

"I'll bring you to time—you don't leave this room until you confess. I'll hold you prisoner until doomsday, if necessary. Look around! See that barred window. You can't escape, you see. Well, I'll keep you here, without even a crust of bread to eat until you cave. Understand? Now I must leave you, and I go with this word of farewell: When you get ready to talk, just notify my man below. They will then give you food, and I will come as soon as I can. But, unless you *do* confess, you shall starve here!"

As Captain Tiger spoke, he glared at the prisoner in his fiercest manner, and then moved toward the door. There he paused for a moment and looked back.

"Will you speak out?" he asked.

"Can't tell yez what I don't know, boss," persisted Tim.

Palgrave muttered something angrily and went out, slamming the door behind him. The key grated in the lock, and then the stairs creaked under his feet as he descended.

Tim drew a long breath and arose.

"Reckon I'm in what Five Points Phil would call a 'pestiferous scrape,'" he observed. "How be I to get out?"

He devoted the next few minutes to an examination, but this only confirmed Palgrave's assertion. It seemed to be utterly out of the question for him to escape. Admitting this at last, he sat down to meditate on his situation. It was a serious one, yet his courage remained good.

Hark! what sound was that? The stairs began creaking again, and he looked anxiously toward the door. What meant this fresh visit? Had Captain Tiger's heart hardened? Was he returning to carry out his worst threat?

The key grated in the lock; the door opened.

Palgrave was not there, but Higgins and the other ruffian were. They came in, closed the door, and directed a look toward Tim Thistle, which gave him a thrill such as Palgrave's worst actions had not aroused. These men were of the low and brutal order, and their aspect was so ominous that the prisoner's heart began to beat rapidly.

"Hyar he is," said Higgins. "The beauty-bird is hyar, an' we'll fix him. Thank fortune I ain't got the cap'n's soft heart, an' I don't let no miser'ble boy knock me out. I keep an honest, first-class house, an' I ain't goin' ter hev no kid run ter the p'lice an' tell on me."

"That's the talk, ol' man!" declared his companion.

Higgins drew a revolver.

"Boy," he continued, "ef you know any prayers, say 'em quick. Yer time in this world is up, an' my shootin'-iron will snuff out the candle o' yer life in jest two minutes!"

CHAPTER IV.

PHIL'S REMARKABLE EXPERIENCE.

WHEN Five Points Phil left his boy friend, he went at once to Nineteenth street. His sole object in answering the advertisement was one of curiosity. Miss Dorothea Sykes, whoever she was, wanted a boy, who was "fond of cats," to run errands and make himself useful.

This advertisement would have passed unnoticed by him if it had not been for the clause referring to cats. This excited his curiosity, and he was determined to know what it meant.

He reached the house, which was old but of respectable appearance, and rung the bell. The door was opened by an old woman, who looked honest and stupid to an extreme. He made known his errand, and the servant conducted him up-stairs to a large room.

"Here is a boy, Miss Sykes," she announced, as mechanically as though she were a machine.

"Come this way, young man, please."

It was a gentle voice, and Phil felt his nature growing milder and better, as he looked at the old lady in the big easy-chair. She was large and heavy, and her abundant hair was nearly as white as snow. But it was the broad, full face that impressed him most. Age had in this respect dealt kindly with her, and despite the wrinkles thereupon, there was a singular air of freshness, peace, gentleness and genuine kindness expressed in every feature. That it was not a worldly face was apparent at a glance, and Phil felt that intentional rudeness to this old lady would be a positive crime.

She looked at him with kind interest.

"Have you come in answer to my advertisement?" she asked, in her former tone.

"I have, mum," replied Phil, with all the politeness he could muster.

"And you want the place?"

"Wa-al, I have come ter investigate."

"Certainly. Of course you will not take it blindly. You look like an honest, willing young man."

"I ain't perfect, but I be honest," Phil replied.

"Where do you live?"

"On Macdougall street."

"Are you poor?"

"I assooredly be."

"I am sorry there are so many poor people," said the old lady, with a sigh. "But tell me of yourself, young man."

Phil obeyed. He was an orphan, and though an old gentleman had seen fit to send him to school and help him in various ways, he had an ambition to do something for himself, during the summer vacation. Miss Sykes spoke commendingly of this resolution, and then added:

"What is your name?"

"Philip Henry Morrill, so called."

"Well, our conversation seems to be satisfactory, thus far. Now, allow me to ask you if you are fond of cats?"

Miss Sykes looked anxiously at him as she asked the question, and it did a good deal to restore Phil to his usual mood.

"I'm passionately fond o' them."

"Indeed! Is this really so?"

"True ez kin be, mum. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things. I've had some experience, arnd I know whar'of I speak."

"Would you be willing to care for them?"

"Ter care fur 'em?"

"Yes."

"Wa-al," said Phil, slowly, feeling that he was in deep water, "I had s'posed they could keer fur themselves, but ef they need a helpin' hand, I'm sure I ain't the pestiferous critter ter neglect 'em."

"The—the what?" asked Miss Sykes, dubiously.

"Pestiferous critter, was what I said. That's Hebroo fur a mean feller, d'ye see?"

The old lady looked at him in a doubtful, puzzled way, as though she did not fully "see," but allowed it to pass.

"I will explain a little," she graciously observed. "I am rich, and alone in the world, and I find it necessary to have some nominal employment, and some way to expend my superfluous funds. Such being the case, I have joined the International Women's Rights League, and the Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Cats."

Five Points Phil stared at the old lady blankly. It was his turn to be dazed.

"Jes' so!" he observed, though he had not understood more than half that Miss Sykes said.

"The managers of these societies often visit me for advice and social exchange of views," she added, "and I fancy I have done great good by means of my money contributions."

"Assooredly," Phil agreed.

"Both these enterprises are grand ones. The wrongs of women and cats cry out for aid, and I am glad to be a humble soldier under the flag, and aid them all I can."

She spoke with enthusiasm, and Phil promptly perceived that though she was the kindest of women, she was a monomaniac on the subjects to which she had given her attention.

"Mum," quoth Phil, waving his hand, "you couldn't be in a better cause, arnd 'tain't so dang'rous fightin' under that flag ez some others."

"Young man, I do not fear danger."

"Great ginger, no! I should say not. Your face shows that you hev an iron narve, arnd could scatter the pestiferous enemy at one sweep o' yer blunderbuss."

"Philip, I don't like that expression of yours—'pestiferous enemy.' It doesn't sound refined."

"Wal, them critters ain't refined. Can't call a shark a goldfish, yer know. Assooredly not!"

"Your point is a good one, but if you were to say 'the depraved enemy,' it would sound better."

"I'll b'ar it in mind."

"My sympathy for cats is of a thoroughly practical nature," resumed Miss Sykes, "and my home is in great degree an asylum for these unfortunates. I have one hundred and three of them in my house now!"

"Great ginger!" Phil ejaculated, looking under the sofa and table, as though he expected to see a dozen of them lying around loose.

"Do you approve of that?" she asked, with a more searching glance than she had before bestowed upon Phil.

"Sartain, I do. What would cats do ef thar was nobody ter take 'em in like a good Samarington? The streets would overflow with 'em; ev'ry stoop would be alive with 'em; hoss-cars would ile the rails with choice cat all the way from the Battery ter Harlem. A'prove on't? Assooredly, mum, assooredly!"

"I am pleased to hear you say so. Now would you like to see these objects of my care?"

"Nothin' else would please me half so much."

"Then follow me."

The old lady arose, and, moving slowly, crossed the room and opened a door at its extremity.

"Step in," she directed.

"Five Points Phil obeyed, and then stood smazed at what he saw. He seemed to have entered the world, or heaven, of cats. They were there in abundance, and of every color—black, white, gray, yellow, and every possible grade of mixture. If there had been a rain of cats, and Miss Sykes had collected the whole shower, they could not have been much thicker.

"Did you ever see a sight equal to that?" she asked, triumphantly.

"Ill take my affidavy that I never did. Never! Great ginger, what a menagerie! What's flocks o' sheep, arnd cattle, arnd hosses, compared ter these mild-eyed cherubs? Hist'ry fales, mum, in tryin' ter ekul this scene; it assooredly does!"

Phil meant all that he said, in one sense, and he stared at the felines in open-mouthed wonder. Miss Sykes was manifestly pleased.

"One hundred and three of them," she said, with almost childish accents, "and every one named. Their names, and, if possible, ages, are recorded in the big book you see yonder."

"Do they amble up fur roll-call reg'lar?"

"They are not quite so learned as that," answered Miss Sykes, beautifully unconscious of any sarcasm. "Do you see the black which lies there?"

"Yes."

"That is Joan d'Arc."

"Eh? What? Jawin' in the Dark?"

"Joan of Arc; named for an old-time heroine.

The gray by the window is Lucrecia Borgia."

"She does look gorgeous, mum."

"Borgia, not gorgeous, is the word. Lucrecia Borgia, the first, was also an old-time heroine. Some men writers have tried to prove that she was a dreadful poisoner, but they wronged her. Ah! the wrongs of women are many!"

"Yes, poor critters! they hev a heap o' pestiferous trouble."

"Say terrible trouble, please."

"Assooredly."

"That large white cat is Romeo."

"He don't want ter roam much 'round New York, or the boys will wind up his career with clubs and sich."

"Wicked boys! See the noble animal that is approaching you. His name is Charlemagne."

"Charley Mann? Wal, he's a pooty lusty-lookin' feller, b'gosh. By the way, whar is Thomas Cat?—or haven't you got him in stock? Miss Sykes, I must say you hev a fine c'lection, arnd I'll look over the pay-roll some day arnd find out jest who is who. Charley Mann, Roamer, Jawer in the Dark and Low-creature Gorgeous. Them names is farmly fixed in my mind, arnd I'll git onto the rest, though I hope they ain't so pestiferous—I mean, so excreotiatin'ly hard ter speak."

"My dear boy, the names you have learned are not as you have them. They are Charlemagne, Romeo, Joan of Arc and Lucrecia Borgia, respectively. Bear this in mind. You will learn them properly in a little while. Ah! yonder comes Tancered—a noble animal, named for the old crusader. Well, Betty, what is it?"

The servant had entered.

"Mr. Seth Maudston is here to see you, Miss Sykes."

"Indeed! I will see him at once. Come, Philip Henry, and sit in the parlor until I can finish with Mr. Maudston. He will remain only a few minutes, and then we will resume our conversation, and see if I am to engage you."

CHAPTER V.

PHIL SEES SOME EMINENT PERSONS.

MISS SYKES left the room and Phil followed, but as he did so, he glanced at the cat to which his attention had last been drawn.

"Lunkhead, the Crew-slayer!" he muttered.

"Hyar's another name fur me ter remember, arnd I'll do it. Great ginger! this is wuss than l'arnin' Greek from a Choctaw Injun. I feel weak in the knees. Wonder what's afore me now?"

He looked and saw Miss Sykes shaking hands with a tall gentleman who looked so melancholy, that Phil felt his heart moved to pity. The visi-

tor regarded Miss Sykes with sad tenderness, and was making a few appropriate remarks.

"Philip," then said the old lady, "this is Mr. Seth Maudston, Past Worthy Grand Master of the Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Cats. Mr. Maudston, this is young Philip Morrill, whom I think of employing."

Five Points Phil made a profound bow.

"Yer obedient, Mr. Muddystone," he remarked, but the tall man looked at him severely.

"Do I really understand, Miss Sykes, that you are going to hire this boy?"

"I think of doing so, sir."

"Reflect, madam, upon the money it will require! This sum, if given to the A. P. C. C.—what good it would do!"

He rolled his eyes upward, but Miss Sykes answered:

"I am sure you will not object when I say that he is here to care for the cats which I harbor."

"That's a fack, Mr. Muddystone," added Phil.

"My name, boy, is Maudston, not Muddystone," that gentleman severely said. "Miss Sykes, I do not object. If the interests of your innocent cats require the lad, engage him by all means. Ah! the door-bell. I hope you are to have no more company."

Mr. Maudston looked uneasy.

"Probably it is only some one on an errand."

"I hope that is all, Miss Sykes, and I would say at once that I have come on business concerning the A. P. C. C., and wish to see you alone."

The door opened, and Betty announced laboriously:

"Miss Frazer and Mrs. Witherell, of the International Woman's Rights League."

And in marched two ladies with stern and business-like demeanor; one being a small woman with a very good-natured face, and the other a tall, lank, sharp-faced woman who looked, in her ancient style of dress, as though she had come to life after a sleep of a hundred years, taken a bath in vinegar, and then come to Miss Sykes's on some hostile errand. Something had given her a decided limp, and she walked with a cane which had a spike in the lower end.

This woman was marching toward Miss Sykes with her inexorable air, but, suddenly seeing Mr. Maudston, she as suddenly came to a halt. The two lank worthies stared silently at each other, and Five Points Phil could have sworn that they were deadly enemies.

Finally Maudston bowed stiffly.

"How do you do, Miss Frazer?"

"Mr. Maudston, sir, I am well, sir. Are you well, sir?"

Miss Frazer's voice was shrill and pitiless, and when she applied the word "sir" to Maudston so freely, she did it with the air of one who knows that she sees a bitter enemy of her sex, and wishes to crush him with the weight of sarcastic politeness.

Miss Sykes looked flurried.

"Please be seated, all," she interrupted.

"I had thought to find you alone," said Miss Frazer, looking at the hostess as though she had committed a crime.

"So had I," said Maudston, pointedly.

"Perhaps," quoth Miss Frazer, with fresh sarcasm, "you wanted to raise money for your cats!"

"Of course," retorted Maudston, "you don't want any money for your women!"

The representatives of the rival associations glared belligerently at each other, while opened Five Points Phil indistinctly muttered:

"Great ginger! Hev I struck a house o' frecks?"

"You shall both have a check from me," Miss Sykes promised, nervously. "Pray be seated!"

This time she was obeyed, and Phil watched from the extremity of the room, smiling to see the undisguised hostility of Maudston and Miss Frazer. The latter waved her spiked cane at the Past Worthy Grand Master of the A. P. C. C., and opened fire again in her relentless manner:

"The wrongs of woman, sir, would melt the heart of an angel. Do angels weep? They do, and all because of the wrongs of my sex. Sir, woman is trod in the dust, by the cruel heel of the monster, Man!"

"I've heard all this before," growled Maudston.

"You shall hear it again, sir. The whole world shall hear it, sir. I will shout it abroad to the four winds of heaven—"

"When you do so, why not deliver it from one of the towers of the Brooklyn Bridge? The winds would have a good chance there."

Miss Frazer's eyes glittered, and she waved her cane until the bright spike seemed to send out flashes of indignant lightning.

"That's it, sir, that's it!" she cried. "The monster, Man, is up and doing. He is always up and doing, greedy to crush my persecuted sex into the dust, and the grime and slime of crime. Oh, monster, Man, what does not Woman suffer at your red hands!"

"Is this a lecture-room?" sneered Maudston.

"It would be a temple of holiness, were it not for the presence of one of that sex whose name I blush to speak."

Maudston instantly put on his spectacles, and stared at the eloquent disciple of woman's rights.

"Where's the blush?" he sarcastically asked.

"Let us have it caught, and put on exhibition."

Up went the pointed cane, and it seemed as though Miss Frazer would surely commit assault and battery, but Miss Sykes interfered just in time, and a few whispered words from Mrs. Witherell subdued the belligerent Miss Frazer.

Five Points Phil heard these secret words.

"Be calm—be calm, or we will not get any money," Mrs. Witherell had said.

Like an echo came Miss Sykes's closing sentence:

"Do let us have peace, and I will give you both a check before you go!"

Light had dawned upon Five Points Phil's mind. What he had seen, together with the faces of the visitors, had been a revelation. He saw in Miss Sykes a simple-minded old woman in the clutches of human hawks, whose only object in life was to bleed their fellow-creatures for selfish ends.

Maudston claimed to represent the Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Cats. Whether there was such a society Phil did not know—he doubted it—but, it seemed, Maudston regularly secured money from Miss Sykes.

Miss Frazer was a champion of "woman's rights." Phil had heard of her cause before, and, from his practical standpoint, it was only a union of crafty adventuresses, who secured a easy living by championing a cause their sensible sisters never bestowed a thought upon. Miss Frazer was plainly a red-hot advocate of "the cause," and, like Maudston, she had aroused Miss Sykes's sympathies, and was getting all the money out of her that she could.

The harpies evidently found a good field of labor; unsophisticated Miss Sykes, imagining that she was helping two good causes, handed over her money freely. Possibly she had supported these unscrupulous wretches for years—for Phil did not believe that the money they acquired went out of their own hands.

The boy's face flushed with indignation. It was bad enough to see a swindle succeeding anywhere, but he had seen so much of Miss Sykes's unpretentious goodness, in various ways, that in this case the crime seemed far greater than in any other.

Suddenly Phil's eyes brightened.

"I'm goin' ter hev this 'sit' with the good old lady," he thought, "and ef I don't find a way ter make them pestiferous bloodsuckers sick, afore I git through, I'm a mightily mistaken individual!"

Conversation then touched upon details, and Maudston and Miss Frazer made known their wants.

The former stated that an amiable, unmarried lady in New Haven wished to aid the suffering cats of that city, but had not the means. A check would be very grateful, and, if made out to Mr. Maudston, he could convey it to her.

Miss Frazer reported great destitution and distress among her followers. The women of Porcupine Peak, Montana, had actually never heard a lecture on woman's rights—and wrongs—and were in a condition of lamentable darkness; in some Louisiana town the women wished to try and elect one of their own sex over the present official—who was a monster, Man; and a scheme was on foot to print enough ballots so that every woman in the United States, if she could not vote, could, at least, have a ballot framed and hung on the wall.

All these things, Miss Frazer observed, required money.

She and Maudston did not openly renew hostilities, but each glared at the other as the requests for money were made, and it was clear that their feud was as bitter as ever.

Miss Sykes, poor soul, gave a tear to both classes of sufferers—women and cats—and gave something more. She filled out two checks, and gave one to each of the leading vampires.

This aroused Phil's indignation anew, but he

was too wise to say anything. Just then he had no influence, but he was determined to secure the position with Miss Sykes, and ultimately foil the monsters who were preying upon her.

When the checks had been secured the callers were evidently not anxious to remain longer. They arose and, somewhat to Phil's surprise, went out together. Before they disappeared they each bestowed a sour glance upon the boy, and it was plain that they were not pleased to see him there.

The door closed behind them; they went down stairs, with Miss Frazer's cane thumping loudly; the outer door clanged, and the house was rid of their presence.

Miss Sykes sighed audibly.

"It is dreadful wearing to be a public character," she observed, looking at Phil with something like her former placid expression.

"Should say so, assooredly."

"Charity, however, must have its due."

Phil resolved to give the good lady a few points on practical charity, when he could, contrasting the needy poor of New York with the Woman's Rights crusade and other myths and humbugs. But the time was not yet ripe.

They resumed the discussion of business, and it was soon settled that Phil should begin work the following morning. Miss Sykes had taken a fancy to him, and she offered good terms.

When all had been settled the boy left the house and started for Macdougall street.

"Wa-al," he soliloquized, when once by himself, "that beats all the 'sperience I ever had. The time when I helped Solomon Richmore is nowhar, arnd the same may be said o' my career ez Jaggars, the butcher-boy. I've see'd a menagerie; I have; arnd ef a Bowery museum kin beat that last lay-out, then they've got new 'freaks' sence I was thar. Freaks! Miss Sykes's habitation is full on 'em. It's a reg'lar house o' freaks, so ter speak."

He smiled in his quaint way.

"I'm dead sure I'll be monstrous fond o' them cats. I ain't never seen none o' the feline race aforeekul ter Charley Maun, Low-Creature Gorgeous, Lunkhead, the Crew-Slayer, arnd the rest—never, by ginger! But them vampires—I don't feel fond o' them a bit. They're pestiferous critters, they be; arnd ef I don't cause a slight rattlin' o' dry bones, I'm a new case o' Dennis. Rob that old lady, will they? Wal, ef they do, then Five Points Phil never'll look on Paradise Park ag'in fur shame. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things!"

Meditating thus he walked briskly along until he reached the house on Macdougall street where he and Tim Thistle had their room. He hastened in, anxious to tell his experience to his friend.

Tim was not in the room.

"Wal, now, this is sorter queer!" muttered Five Points Phil. "Super-time—no supper—no Tartaric Tim. Queer, I must say, fur I never knowed him ter neglect his juty afore like this. But I'll git supper, and charge ter his account."

He did his part of it—the landlady always helped about the cooking—but he ate alone. Tim did not appear to partake of his share. Another hour passed—two hours. By that time Phil had grown uneasy. He had a presentiment, vague but troublesome, that his partner had met with misfortune of some kind.

CHAPTER VI.

TIM THISTLE PROVES HIMSELF A TARTAR.

THE words of the ruffian could not convey any more of menace to Tim Thistle than his looks and actions had already done, but the whole combined was enough to frighten the bravest man, not to mention a boy. There stood the big desperado with his drawn revolver, and his companion just behind him, and Tim's days seemed numbered.

It is not to his discredit to say that he was frightened.

"You won't need the shooter, Tip," said Higgins's companion, with a coarse laugh. "You've scared the little varmint ter death."

"He's got venom left, an' don't ye doubt it, Abe Briggs. I kin read his sharp face. Youngster, be ye all ready?"

Higgins flourished the revolver.

"Hold on!" directed Briggs. "That shooter'll bring the p'lice down onter us. Use a knife, instead."

"Thar's some hoss-sense in that. I'll do it."

Higgins put up the revolver and drew a long knife.

"Now, bub, I'm arter ye!" he said, and advanced.

This hull had been sufficient for Tartar Tim to recover his "nerve" somewhat, and with returning courage came a plan for his safety. He

felt that it would be folly for him to try to resist the assassins, but there was another way besides resorting to such a measure.

"See hyar, Tip Higgins!" he exclaimed, with unexpected coolness, "do ye want ter scare de life out av me? Have done wid yer nonsense, fur you don't want ter carve me up."

He seemed so honest and cheerful that Higgins involuntarily paused.

"The blazes I don't!" he remarked. "And why not?"

"Because I'm vallyble to yez, me good friend."

"In what way?"

"Do ye know Jed Jackley?"

This was an all-important question, and Tim listened eagerly for the reply. If the assassins did not know Jed, the hope of staying their murderous hands was too small to be considered. If he was known to them, all hope was not gone.

Higgins lowered the knife, but a suspicious scowl appeared on his face.

"Yes, I know Jed."

"Wal, don't ye carve me up until ye see Jed."

"Why not?"

"'Cause he's my frien', an' I'll give yez this tip: There is more in dis case than you think. Ask Jed."

"Is Jed any better than the cap'n?"

"He kin tell you some things de cap'n won't tell, an' don't know. Stick a pin dere. Ask Jed, an' see what he tells yez, me boy."

Tim was talking quite confidently by this time, for he believed that he could secure a reprieve. Who Jed really was, and what his relations were with "the cap'n," Higgins and Briggs, the boy did not know. Clearly, however, if he was saved from immediate death, it would be by the power of Jed Jackley's name.

Higgins looked confused and uncertain. His was a dull, stupid head, through which an idea always had great trouble to go, and the situation impressed him as being very strange and complicated.

"This may be a trick," he observed, doubtfully.

"It's no trick, Tip: I'm tellin' ye de straight facts."

"Jed ain't hyar ter settle it."

"Go an' bring him, thin."

"I could do that."

"Av course ye could."

"But Jed might take yer part."

The desperado was growing suspicious again.

"Nonsinse! Haven't I towld ye that he will give ye good r'asons why you needn't care ter kill me? Ain't there anny one in de ring but you, Tip Higgins?"

"You're mighty young ter be in."

"Ask Jed."

"I will!"

Higgins thrust his knife away, rattling it down into its sheath.

"I'll go fur Jed right away," he added, "an' when he comes, ef I find ye're lyin', all New York can't save ye. Mark that down! Zounds! I don't have much faith in ye, anyway, an' I'll be blamed ef you shall be left alone. Abe Briggs, you stay right hyar by the kid until I come back."

"Who'll mind the bar?"

"Hang the bar!"

"Hang the luck, ef I've got ter stay hyar, like a statoo!"

Abe looked dissatisfied and surly, but Higgins reminded him that he was only an employee, and told him to obey orders. He prepared to leave. He would have taken the key, locking Briggs in with Tim, but his assistant protested so stoutly against this arrangement that Briggs was finally given the key, himself. Higgins departed, leaving Tim and his other captor.

"Now, Tim had no great amount of faith in the result of Tip's investigations. As he had gained from one source and another, these two men, Jackley and "Captain Tiger," were in some way united, the latter being the leader. Tim suspected that they were partners in evil-doing, if not in extreme crime.

Evidently, Jackley had a traitorous vein. He did not know who Captain Tiger was, but had hired Tim to discover. Tim had failed, and had been captured. What was more probable than that, when Jackley learned the facts, he would become alarmed and, to save his own neck, deny all knowledge of the boy.

"That's de way it's likely to work," thought the Tartar, an' when Higgins comes back, I'll be in as bad fix as ever."

He looked at Briggs, and Briggs looked at him.

"Dull, ain't it?" asked the latter.

"Yes."

"Do ye plays keerds?"
 "I play some games."
 "S'pose I go down an' get a pack o' keerds?"
 "All right," Tim answered.
 "I'll do it. Do ye know, ef thar's a thing in the wide world which I hate, 'tis ter set 'round an' do nothin'."

"Same hyar," replied Tim, resolved to humor him.

Briggs went down to the bar-room. When he returned he brought not only a pack of cards, but a huge bottle of whisky.

"Suthin' ter wet my throat," he said, shaking the bottle.

And he "wet his throat," accordingly. Tim Thistle saw some hope in this. There was enough liquor in the bottle to twice intoxicate Briggs, and if he only went at it zealously, he might be overcome by the stuff—if Higgins only remained away long enough. The possibility of escape excited the Tartar somewhat, and his hands were not exactly steady as he dealt the cards.

Briggs had lighted a lamp, as it was growing dark in the room, and the glow showed a reckless expression on his face. He seemed in just the right mood to drink to excess.

Playing began. At Tim's request the game was casino. He never played before with so little interest in the game, but that was not against him. He was determined that his companion should win anyway, to place him in good humor. So Briggs played and won, and as he played he also paid frequent homage to the big bottle.

At short intervals he placed the bottle to his mouth, and the stuff gurgled down his throat. A perceptible vacancy was soon made in the bottle, but Briggs carried his load well.

After a short time, however, he offered Tim a drink. The latter did not accept, but did take the offer as a proof that Briggs was growing better natured.

The Tartar determined to sound him.

"Will the cap'n be back ter-night?"

"Don't know. I build for seven."

"I hate ter stay here."

"So do I. Ah! I take in big casino."

"I don't think he ought ter have shut me up."

"He prob'ly consulted his taste, not yourn."

"Yes. You've won another game. You're a good player, Mr. Briggs."

"Yes; an' I kin drink pooty from a bottle, too."

He proved it by drinking.

"Suppose you an' me go out fur a walk, Briggs."

"What fur?"

"Why, ter paint de town red."

"What's the good? See that bottle? Thar's p'ison enough in thar ter make me so drunk that I'll think I own all o' Fifth avenue, an' the gran' stand at the Polo Grounds."

"Dat's true, Briggs, but the objection ter stayin' here is that it's terrible dull settin' round an' doin' nothin'."

It was a sly insinuation, based on Briggs's own previous statements, and it had effect at once.

"By George! you're right, boy."

"Then why not go out?"

"Can't do it. I'm yer keeper, an' Higgins would rave like a Texas steer on a rampage, ef I disobeyed his orders."

"But he needn't know it. We kin go out fur a walk, see de sights a bit, an' then come back."

"Wait a bit!" said Briggs.

He laid down his cards, took another long drink, and then planted his elbows on the table and stared straight at Tim. The latter perceived, for the first time, that the man's eyes had grown glossy. He could stand a good deal of liquor, but he had passed the safety point, and was no longer himself.

"Let me look at ye," he said, in a thick voice.

"You hev made a proposal. It suits my fancy, but it goes ag'in' what is plainly my duty. I want ter look in yer eyes, an' see ef you're on the squar'. Don't want ter 'scort ye out ef you're goin' ter run first chance ye git—could never ketch ye in the world, I know; my legs wouldn't take up right. Fact is, though my head an' body are sober ez a man on the gal-lers, my legs is drunk. That's whar the mischief comes in. I can't drink liquid p'ison 'thout my legs git drunk. Consarned pair o' legs, I've got; reg'lar ole tipplers. Reckon they'll hev the jamjims some day. But I'm sober!"

Briggs stretched a point in saying so; he was pretty well worsted by the liquid enemy, though his legs may have had the worst of it.

"I was goin' ter look at ye," he pursued. "O' course I'll do that with my head. My legs are ord'narily good lookers, but they're drunk now,

my legs be. Sad affair! It grieves me when my legs are in liquor. Why can't they be temperate, like me?"

"A little exercise out of doors will fix dem all right," Tim suggested.

"Boy, I dunno; I s'picious o' you. My legs have looked at you, an' they say thar is evil in ye. We won't go out."

"But you promised ter go."

"My legs did; I didn't."

"Will ye back out so?"

"I won't, but my legs will, an' they carry the day. That's all they're capable o' carryin', jest now."

"Come, now, let's go out fur a few minutes," said Tim, in his most persuasive manner, though convinced that it was a hopeless appeal.

"My legs may go out," quoth Briggs, "but I shall stay right hyar. So will you, my gamecock o' the ragin' Hudson. You was put hyar ter stay, an' you will stay. Settle down, varmint, an' don't look at me so wild-like. You can't git away; ef you try, my legs will ketch you, ef they chase ye ter High Bridge. While the race is on, I'll stay hyar. Go out? No; ef ye try it, I'll hammer ye flat!"

All of the fellow's good-humor had gone, and he glared at the boy in a more ugly way. But Tim Thistle took it coolly. He had made up his mind that it would come to that, and, abandoning his first plan, had formed another.

If Briggs was as drunk as he seemed, the new way might work; anyhow, the Tartar intended to try it.

The table was between them, and Tim placed his hands against it, braced himself, and then, exerting all his strength, pushed it against his captor without warning. Under the circumstances this novel mode of attack could not but succeed, and Briggs, clutching vainly at the air, went over in a heap, crushing his chair. Thus far all was well—what of the next move?

Tim Thistle's mind was on the coveted key, and he sprang forward to get it from Abe's pocket; but the latter, knocking the table away, remained on his back, and sent out his feet and hands in a series of hap-hazard blows.

"Keep off," he snarled, thickly, "My legs are drunk, but I'm sober. You can't hev it, you 'tarnal little varmint."

But Tim was not to be thwarted thus. He saw that Briggs was practically helpless, and he shot under his arm and secured the key with a few quick movements, despite the man's twisting and squirming. Yes; the coveted article was in his hand at last, but just as he made sure of it, a thunderous rap sounded at the door, and a hoarse voice cried:

"What's goin on in there? Let me in, or I'll smash the door!"

Tip Higgins had returned.

CHAPTER VII.

TIM "HAS IT OUT WITH HIGGINS!"

TIM THISTLE paused in dismay. There was no mistaking that voice; Higgins was home again, and nothing could have been more untimely for the boy than his arrival. If five minutes more had been vouchsafed him, he would have been safely out of the desperado's lair. As it was, he was in a dangerous situation again.

What was to be done? Tim tried desperately to think of a means of relief, and while he did so Higgins pounded at the door and demanded entrance, while Briggs made energetic efforts to stand. Several times he got upon his hands and knees, but the latter seemed to have lost all power, and he would roll over again. Briggs was very drunk.

"Oh! you dastard!—you malignant snake!" he cried, "ef I git hold on ye, I'll behead yer right away. Wait till my legs git sober, an' I'll trample ye inter the dust, an' knock my boot-heels off on yer proboscis. Whoop! I'm sober, but I don't keer who knows that my legs is drunk!"

"Let me in!" roared Higgins.

"Why don't ye come in, you fool?" retorted Briggs.

"I'll break down the door!"

"Break it down, an' be hanged!"

"Abe Briggs, have you deserted me, ye skunk?"

"Skunk, yerself! When you come in, my legs will lick ye."

Just then the speaker rolled over again, and he calmly stretched out on the floor, closed his eyes and muttered:

"Landlord, I'll keep this 'ere bed all night!"

And then Briggs was to be counted out, for he went to sleep as serenely as though nothing was out of order around the place, heedless of Tip's

hammering and his anger. By that time Tim had formed a plan. It seemed clear that he had got to fight, and though it seemed equally clear that he would stand no chance against Higgins, he intended to try his luck, and do all that sturdy bravery would allow.

He had secured a leg of the broken chair, and, as this was unusually large, it made quite a respectable weapon. He balanced it in his hand, and looked coolly at the door.

"Reckon I've got ter have it out wid him," he observed.

Just then the door rattled more than ever. Higgins had given up all thought of peaceable entrance, and was determined to break in. He flung his heavy form against the door time and again, and it creaked dismally on its hinges. It must soon go down, and Tim stood ready with his club.

Crack!

The obstruction gave way; the door shot into the room, and that too so suddenly that Higgins followed it helplessly. When the door fell he fell too, and lay sprawling on top of it.

The club did not seem to be needed; Tim Thistle made a dash to pass the ruffian.

He was baffled. One of Tip's big hands shot out, closing around the boy's ankle, and it seemed as though the latter must come to a stop. He did not think so. As Higgins gained his hands and knees Tim gave him a swing, jerk and push, and the fellow went clattering down the stairs. Unfortunately, he clung to Tim, and the latter accompanied him in the descent.

Down they went, bouncing from stair to stair, and making an astonishing amount of noise.

Tim expected to receive serious injury—it was bad enough to fall down stairs at any time, but to be accompanied by a big fellow like Higgins, whose whole weight might at any time strike upon and crush him, rendered Tim's case serious.

Nevertheless, he escaped the latter danger, and did not suffer much from contact with the stairs; he reached the foot in remarkably good condition, and felt none the worse for it.

He was quickly on his feet, and making for the door which led to the bar-room.

Higgins's hand again grasped him.

"No, you don't!" cried the desperado.

"Leave me go!" retorted Tim, struggling desperately.

"Not by a blamed sight!"

Tim lunged forward against the door; it flew open and he fell into the saloon, breaking Tip's hold.

"You can't get out!" shouted the latter.

But the Tartar sped across the floor, toward the outer door, hoping to find it unlocked.

Heavy steps crashed behind him.

Higgins was in pursuit.

Unfortunately, Tim collided with a table, and the delay was sufficient for Higgins's purpose. He again seized the boy. The latter's blood was stirred to a decisive point by this time—the point of escape was so near that its inducements were more potent than ever. He must escape. Owing to the utter darkness in the saloon he could see nothing, but he turned upon Higgins like an animal at bay. He had been considered a very good wrestler, and with surprising agility he caught hold of Tip and twisted his leg around those of the desperado.

Higgins never knew just what "lock" caught him, but the result was very perceptible. His burly form suddenly swayed sideways; his feet flew from under him; and down he went with a crash which made the bottles and glasses dance behind the bar.

Tim Thistle did not go down. On the contrary, he was again at liberty, and he made a rush for the door. His hand fell upon the knob. Was the door locked? This was an important question to him. He tested the matter.

The door was locked!

A cloud fell upon his spirits, but, a moment later, his hand touched a projection near the knob. It was the key; it had been left in the lock.

Higgins was growling and sending out threats close behind him, but his time had come and gone. Tim gave the key a turn, torn open the door and rushed out. Once more he was under the open sky, in the glare of street lights, and among honest pedestrians. He drew a deep, grateful breath, and his fears vanished.

Nevertheless, he did not tarry there. It was probable that Higgins would follow and claim him as a rebellious son, or resort to some other trick to get him back, so the Tartar proceeded to leave that locality without delay.

If his enemy pursued he saw nothing of him, and he improved his chances so well that he soon stood upon Broadway. The great street

had never before looked so honest and kind; it seemed to be draped in respectability, and covered with promises of protection; the lights were brighter to his eyes than ever before, and they appeared like old friends who were twinkling, winking and smiling upon him.

Brave as the lad was his nerves had been severely tried in Tip Higgins's den, and the change was very grateful.

He lost no time in going to Macdougall street, and when his quarters were reached he found Five Points Phil already there, reading a book. But the book was put down, and Phil looked at him wonderingly.

"Great ginger! is it you, my b'loved contemporary? Ye take me by s'prise. Thought you'd gone ter Europe, or j'ined an opera comp'ny ter sing ez a *prime donkey*, ez they call it. Was jest goin' ter git out a s'arch-warrant, b'gosh!" The Tartar dropped into a chair wearily.

"You come near needin' that same, Phil."

"Hey? I did? Great ginger! hev you be'n in a pestiferous scrape?"

"I hev be'n in a pestiferous scrape."

The boy from Paradise Park grew suddenly sober.

"Tell me about it!" he directed.

Tim Thistle obeyed, giving the story in detail, but dwelling more on the mysterious part of the case than his adventure.

"My b'loved contemporary," said Phil, at the close, "you hev surely b'en in an obnoxious pinch—you hev, assoorredly. But you made one mistake."

"What was dat?"

"Why didn't ye hev Tip Higgins 'rested?"

"Didn't think ave it; besides, I don't know as a cop would 'a' done it fur me, as I'm a boy."

"Thar is boss-sense in that, and now that I think on't, I'm glad you didn't. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things. Timothy T., hyar's a chance fur you ter do some detective work."

"I know it."

"You've run onter a pestiferous mystery; the air is blue with it. It seems that Palgrave, *alias* 'the cap'n,' is leader o' a gang o' cut-throats o' some sort, arnd that Jed Jackley, Higgins arnd Briggs is in the gang. Jed warnts ter know more about 'the cap'n,' who must be sailin' under two flags. My b'loved frien', I smell smoke, so ter speak, arnd ef you work up this case you'll get due credit, arnd, mebbe, be ap'inted patrolman up in the 'goat districk.'"

"Bejabbers, I don't want no 'goat districk' in mine!" Tim cried. "Whin I git sentenced fur crime I'll not go dere, but over to de Island. But, ave course, you'll help me in this?"

"Can't do it."

"No?"

"No. I've got a sit in the House o' Freaks!"

Tim looked with wide-open eyes.

"What's that?" he asked.

"I'm ter take charge o' a menagerie, arnd make things pleasant fur Mr. Mudstone arnd Miss Blazer."

"I don't understan', at all."

"Didn't expect you would, but I hev arnswered that ad., arnd the case is full o' concentrated richness. Fond o' cats? Wa-al, I should smile ef I ain't, arnd I anticipate piles o' fun with Charley Maun, Lunkhead, the Crew-slayer, Jawer in the Dark and the rest. When ye git an arternoon off, drop 'round ter the House o' Freaks arnd I'll show ye 'round."

All this was not calculated to give Tim Thistle much light, so Phil went into particulars, and told fully of his visit to Miss Sykes and the strange things he had seen there.

"So ye see I've dropped onter a piece o' pestiferous rascality, ez well ez you. New York is full o' sich, arnd ef it wa'n't fur boys like you arnd me, honest folks wouldn't stand no chance. The p'lice can't see *everything*; we youthful chaps must tend ter the rest. Mudstone arnd Blazer is my game."

"I think, me boy, dat you have the safest job," remarked the Tartar. "See how I had to fight this evenin'. You've got ter use hi'd-work, but not fight."

"Don't be so sure o' that. Ef you's ter see Miss Blazer, arnd see her flourish that 'ere cane, arnd observe the spike in the eend on't, you wouldn't feel so sart'in but I'll hev ter fight. I tell ye, Miss Blazer is a chief, arnd she may descend onter me like a flock o' buzzards. Ef she does, I'll set Lunkhead, the Crew-slayer, onter her, by ginger! Say, let's go over arnd take a squint at Higgins's saloon."

Phil had changed his subject suddenly, and then clapped his cap upon his head. Tim liked the last idea, and they went out together. In fifteen minutes they reached the saloon.

The place was dark and silent, and when they tried the door, it was found to be locked. Clear-

ly Higgins had taken alarm and fled. It was useless to look for him then.

At Phil's suggestion, Tim then went to where he was to make his report to Jed Jockley. This was the latter's boarding-house, but Jed was not in. The landlady said that he had received a visitor two hours before, after which he packed a valise and went away hurriedly—where, she did not know.

"Squire Jackley has skipped out, too," said Phil, as he and Tim walked homeward, "but I hev an idee you'll see 'em all ag'in. You arnd me hev both got cases ter work up, arnd we'll do it, arnd make the pestiferous plotters quake at sound o' our names. Yes, sir!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STOLEN JEWELS.

ONE of the best houses on Twentieth street was that of Mr. Elbert Bainbridge. He was a bachelor, reputed wealthy, highly respected, and a man who, in the words of those who knew him well, "was always to be depended upon by his friends." By this they meant that, while never prodigal, he was always ready to lend a helping hand to those in distress.

Mr. Bainbridge and his nephew, Harry Shelby, were sitting together in the former's room. Harry, who was a struggling young lawyer, had for years made his home with his uncle. The latter had been very kind and helpful, and though he could not advance Harry to the front rank in his profession by means of his money, he did ward off the unpleasant vexations which so often render the life of a young professional man, a precarious and gloomy one.

Bainbridge looked to be forty-five years of age. He was, really, older, but his hair remained almost wholly untouched by time, and his years did not show in that respect.

It was only the deep lines upon it that told of passing years, but when one marked the strong, thoughtful face, it was easy to surmise that close application to important, perhaps abstruse, studies had caused the furrows.

Shelby was a manly, frank, intelligent-looking man of twenty-four, and generosity, candor and uprightness were natural elements of his character.

"Harry," said the elder man, breaking a silence, "I want you to do an errand for me this evening."

"I'll do it, willingly."

"Do you know Mr. Seth Maudston?"

"I think not."

"He lives on Seventeenth street, several blocks east."

"Yes."

"I have been making some researches in which I think he can aid me. I will write a note, which I desire him to answer at once. You will please bring back the reply."

"All this I will cheerfully do."

"Should he be out, please wait for him."

"Certainly."

"By the way," pursued Bainbridge carelessly, "I understand that a young lady, named Stella Fielding, is now visiting there. She is from the country, but I feel some interest in her, and would like to have you mentally analyze her, and bring me a report. Engage her in conversation as much as possible, to see what her mental capabilities are, and give me a conscientious opinion."

"Now you set a pleasant task for me," said Harry, laughing.

"Remember that she is only a country girl."

"Only a country girl? That's the strongest recommendation you could give her. The city girl has the brilliancy of worldly experience; the country girl, the honorable conscience born of the green fields and the pure air she breathes. The one is the glittering, flashing coals that sparkle in the grate; the other, the same substance in its natural state, only waiting the touch of flame to glow and sparkle like the other."

"But it requires worldly experience—city life—to make a woman's intellect show to advantage."

"And her heart to a disadvantage," dryly replied Shelby.

Mr. Bainbridge had not turned conversation in this direction without an object, and his expression showed how well he was pleased.

"I am glad to find that you are a philosopher, and a sensible one at that. All philosophers are not that way. Well, I'll write the note and get you started."

This was done, and Bainbridge was soon alone. He stood at the window and watched Shelby as he walked away.

"If I ever had an earnest wish in the world,

it is that the dear boy will admire Stella Fielding. I would give half my fortune to see her his wife—that is, if she is the girl that report states her to be. She might not at first shine in society as his wife, but women are quick to learn, and the dry details of country life would soon be abandoned, in conversation, for the city world of general talk, books, amusements and the like. Will my artifice succeed? Will he like Stella? Ah! he is sublimely unconscious that this errand is only a trick of mine to have him meet the young lady, and that I have taken equal pains to have Seth Maudston absent."

Harry was unconscious of all this, and he walked over to Seventeenth street without anything serious in his mind.

Reaching his destination, he was informed that Seth Maudston was out, but when he said that he would wait, he was shown into the parlor, to the presence of Mrs. Maudston and Stella Fielding.

Both were strangers to him, but he proceeded to make himself agreeable with the unconscious ease of a man of the world, nor did he forget his uncle's injunctions.

Mrs. Maudston, as has before been said, was a woman of weak character. She looked meek, and was weak. She never had any decided opinions, or, if she did, kept them to herself. If there was a subject upon which she could converse to advantage, no one had ever discovered what it was.

She was not one of Shelby's "glittering coals," and all the experience of New York, Paris and London combined could not have made her an interesting conversationalist.

This was fortunate for the success of Mr. Bainbridge's plan, for it threw the task of entertaining Harry upon Stella.

His first impression of her had been favorable. She was undeniably pretty and refined. Subsequent developments proved that she was intelligent, well informed, pleasing and gifted with imagination tempered with common sense.

Shelby decided that he would have a very favorable report to make to his uncle. Furthermore, he decided that if he could have his way about it, this would not be the last time he would see Miss Fielding.

They were speaking of her stay in the city, when she chanced to observe that her arrival had been anything but agreeable.

"How was that?" Harry asked.

"I was robbed."

"Robbed! In what way?"

"I started with several thousand dollars' worth of jewels; when I reached here, they were gone."

Stella tried to speak lightly. The loss, terrible as it seemed, and bade fair to prove, to her, could be only a trifle to this rich young man—she judged that he was rich. All her efforts did not prevent a tremor of her voice, however.

"That was unfortunate," said Harry, with ready sympathy. "Were you robbed on the train?"

"I have no idea when it was done; it is very mysterious, indeed."

"How did you bring them, or try to bring them?"

"In a little basket, which might have been a work or lunch basket."

"Rather a novel way to convey jewels."

"It was Mr. Maudston's suggestion. He thought that no one would think of looking for jewels in a lunch-basket. No one did look there," she firmly added; "the basket did not leave my hands at all. No one else touched it."

"Then how were the jewels taken from you?"

"It is a complete mystery."

"I am interested in this case. May I ask for particulars?"

Stella told the whole story, reiterating her assertion that she had not released her hold on the basket once. Yet, though she *knew* that the jewels were in the basket when she left home, they were gone when she reached Maudston's.

"It's very mysterious," Shelby thoughtfully agreed, when the story was told. "Of course you have informed the police?"

"My uncle has engaged a detective to work up the case."

"One of Inspector Byrnes's men?"

"A private detective."

"Oh!"

It was evident from the speaker's tone and manner that he had but little faith in private detectives. His face grew more thoughtful. Stella had not told him why she had wished to sell the jewels—she would not bother him with an account of the mortgaged farm—but he had detected the fact that the robbery had been a severe blow to her; that she was now in deep

trouble; and he at once took more interest in the matter than was to be expected of a stranger.

"I would like to put a friend of mine—one of Byrnes's men—on the trail," he said.

"My uncle requested that the matter be left to his friend."

"May I ask his name?"

"Certainly; it is Derriby."

"I don't know him."

"Mr. Maudston says he is very shrewd."

"Yes."

Harry answered absently, and did not press his point, but he determined to mention it to Maudston, on his return. He had taken a deep interest in the robbery, partly because it was so mysterious, but principally because he had also taken an interest in Stella.

He suspected that she was poor; that the loss of the jewels was a severe blow; and he resolved that she should have them back, if possible.

In due time Maudston returned. He had been called away on business, by a note from a friend, but had attended to it and come back. He knew Shelby by sight and seemed pleased to see him, and wrote out an answer to Elbert Bainbridge's note with evident care. He was glad to oblige his correspondent, though rather surprised at being consulted.

When this was done Harry referred to the jewel-robbery.

"A mysterious affair," he added.

"At present, yes," replied Maudston.

"Now," continued the young man, lightly, "you know the profession of a lawyer and detective are a trifle alike. I feel an interest in this case. I know of one of the detectives in the city—one attached to Inspector Byrnes's staff—and this man, to oblige me, will take hold of the case on the no-success-no-pay plan. Are you willing he should do it?"

Maudston's bland expression had faded perceptibly.

"The work is being well attended to now," he said, almost rudely.

"But my man is one of the best of New York detectives."

"So is the detective who is already at work. Two such men are not needed—my man assures me that he has a definite theory, and will soon recover the jewels."

"Do you know what his theory is?"

"No," was the curt reply.

Three pairs of eyes were fixed upon Maudston with some surprise. He was rude when, it seemed, he should be grateful.

"I never heard of Derriby, the detective," said Harry, mildly.

"How do you know that he is my man?"

Maudston was so perceptibly displeased that Shelby hesitated, but Stella frankly stated that it was she who had told the visitor about Derriby. Her uncle shot her a glance anything but friendly, and then coldly added:

"Derriby is the man, and I prefer that he continue in the case. I know him to be as shrewd as any detective in New York, and I am not going to depose him just as he has secured a clew. We will not mention another man."

A thin coating of politeness spread over the last sentences did not serve to make them less than ungracious, but Stella, who had flushed with mortification, spoke bravely and thanked Shelby for his kind interest. She nearly healed the wound to his pride, and when he shortly after arose to go, and Mr. Maudston gave him an indifferent invitation to call again, he looked at Stella before answering.

In his opinion her eyes silently said, "Come!" and his decision was made. Maudston might be surly, but Stella was not; she was charming. He promised to call, and then took his departure.

When he was gone Maudston read Miss Fielding a lecture on the evils of being too confidential "with a stranger." He tried to speak pleasantly, but there was a ring to his voice which told the girl that she had offended him deeply.

Shelby went home and gave the letter to Mr. Bainbridge. Next came his report concerning Stella, and it was far more enthusiastic than the uncle had dared hope. It delighted him, and he saw ground for hope that his little artifice would bear rich fruit.

Harry, however, had something more on his mind, and he wound up by giving an account of the lost jewels.

Bainbridge was interested from the first; indeed, his rapt attention and sympathy were so evident that the younger man was surprised. Not a word of the story was lost by Bainbridge.

"This is odd, very odd!" he declared. "It is also very mysterious, and I feel sure that the

loss is a serious one to Miss Fielding. Harry, I am interested in her, and, by Jove! I am not going to have the jewels permanently lost through a bungling nobody of a detective. My boy, engage your capable man, keep shady, and the mystery shall be solved!"

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT BURGLARS DID.

FIVE POINTS PHIL arose early in the morning and prepared to go to Miss Sykes's, to begin his service there. Before his departure he and Tim Thistle held a further consultation. Tim felt sore places as an effect of tumbling down-stairs at Tip Higgins's, and this increased his zeal to bring the gang to justice.

Due inquiry had established the fact that Palgrave had a room in the house next to them, and the Tartar proposed to settle down to business and watch for the man until he appeared. In case he did not come at all, Jed Jackley could be "shadowed." Both Phil and Tim were of the opinion that Higgins and Briggs were likely to keep carefully out of sight until they thought the danger had passed.

Phil left his young friend sitting grimly at the window.

"It'll be dull as de blazes," observed Tim, "but I kin stand it, I reckon."

"Or set it."

"Yes."

"You won't lose nothin' by it, ef I size the biz correctly. I b'lieve you're onter the track o' big game—B. J. G. game, so ter speak. Palgrave's out'ard respectability don't go fur nothin'—a marn may smile, and be a villain still. Hunt him down, arnd you land a weighty fish."

"I'm goin' ter land de varmint!" Tim firmly asserted. "I'm not sure but I's cut out fur a p'liceman, though I'll niver sarve in de goat districk, as you insinuated. I think a job in de City Hall, or P'lice Headquarters, would suit me."

"Great ginger! ye ain't got half bay-winder enough on yer stummick!" said Phil, laughing. "You'd be a right good marn in the goat deestrick, 'cause you're a good runner."

"I ain't ketchin' goats now; the game I'm after is men, an' ye'll see me git dem, too!" the Tartar stoutly replied.

Leaving him in this mood, Phil went to Nineteenth street to Miss Sykes's house.

Miss Sykes received her new employee kindly and talked with him half an hour before mentioning business. She wished to study him attentively. Now, the good old soul was as unsophisticated as a child, but she flattered herself that she was an accurate judge of human nature, and her judgment told her that Five Points Phil was an honest, worthy lad.

In this she was right. Of her perspicacity in the case of Miss Frazer, of the I. W. R. L., and others, the least said the best for good Miss Sykes.

Phil thought that the character of the "House of Freaks" bade fair to be kept well up when, at his first work he was asked into the next room to pronounce on the case of a brindled cat which, in his mistress's opinion, was threatened with typhoid fever, or something equally dangerous.

Preserving his gravity well, Phil made a careful examination, particularly of the patient's tongue and temperature, and was able to assure Miss Sykes that Hannibal—the cat—was not in danger; a statement that relieved her greatly.

"Although," she added, "I do not value him as highly as some of the others."

"He ain't got the clarsic beauty o' Jawer in the Dark, nur the kingly dignity o' Junkhead, the Crew-slayer," Phil gravely answered.

"You mean Tancered, the Crusader," corrected Miss Sykes.

"Assoreedly. Arnd how is Charley Maun arnd Low-creature Gorgeous?"

"Both well," said their mistress, smiling, "but you will have to look in the record-book and inform yourself a little better as to their names."

"Will look over the roster thoroughly soon. Say, ef I's you, I'd make the rear o' this mansion more tighter."

"The present arrangement is for the convenience of my-four-footed friends."

"Somebody's two-footed friends may amble in, ef you don't look out. The buildin' operations op'site gives a cl'ar road fur house-breakers, ez you kin see. You can't trust a highwayman a rod, mum. Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn."

Miss Sykes had occasion to remember this warning vividly afterward, but it soon passed from her mind at the time.

Phil's first day passed rather monotonously. Twice he went out on errands and at times he worked about the house, but the labor bade fair

to be too insignificant to give variety. He wished that Maudston and Miss Frazer would happen in, so that he could see the latter wield her spiked cane to the great danger of her enemy, but they did not come.

That night Phil retired early and, being sleepy, was soon unconscious of all around him. He did not awaken as peacefully as he fell asleep. Some hours passed—how many he did not know—when he suddenly became conscious.

His eyes opened at once, and, impressed with the idea that something was wrong, he tried to rise at the same moment. He did not succeed. Some strong opposing influence flung him back on the pillow.

"Hang the boy! he's knocked the sponge away!" exclaimed a rough voice.

Phil saw two burly men beside him, and one now grasped him by the throat.

"Run a gag into his mouth!" this person ordered. "Never mind the sponge; we'll tie him up."

Phil had no trouble to understand the situation. The odor of chloroform was in the room, these men were masked; and it was clear that they were villains on some lawless errand. He struggled with all his power, but the men first stuffed part of a towel into his mouth as a gag, and then bound him hand and foot. He was powerless against such odds, and had to submit.

He could only use his eyes, and, as the men were masked, this did but little good. Testing the cords, they then left the room carefully.

Five Points Phil lay and listened. He knew that burglars were on the scene, and hoped that they would come to grief, but did not expect it. As his room was near the top of the house, it was likely that Miss Sykes and Betty had first been silenced.

He heard the burglars move outside; heard the stairs creak under their feet as they went down; and then the sounds were transferred to the room where Miss Sykes passed her time during the day. Phil listened more attentively. In this room was Miss Sykes's safe—a dilapidated old thing, which did not look capable of defying any burglar.

Would they open that?

Clink! clink!

It was the sound of metal against metal. They were really at work on the safe.

Clink! clank!

The sound of their efforts irritated Phil beyond measure, but he could not stop it. The clink-clink went on for nearly half an hour—then abruptly ceased.

"The pestiferous critters hev got it open!" thought the boy.

There was no more of the previous sound, but other noises in the room below were audible for several minutes. Then they ceased, and death-like silence fell over the house. Clearly, the burglars had finished their work and gone.

"I tol' Miss Sykes ter make things secure at the rear," Phil thought, "but 'twan't done. Great ginger! I don't like this. It's mernotonous, sprawlin' hyar on my back like a turned-over turtle. Assoreedly!"

It grew more monotonous before relief came, and every member and bone in his body seemed running a race to see which could ache the hardest, but footsteps were finally to be heard—they grew nearer—the door opened—and Betty entered, bearing a light.

"Here you are," she said, deliberately.

Phil tried to talk but, naturally, could not with the gag in his mouth.

"I will let you loose," added Betty, calmly.

She set down the lamp with such moderation that the impatient boy expected to see her stop and trim the wick, and then proceeded to release him with as much machine-like deliberation as though it were the most common thing in life to be tied up by burglars.

Phil's tongue moved the moment it had a chance, though his speech was thick, owing to his cramped jaws.

"Hev they gone?"

"Do you mean the burglars?"

"Yes, yes; o' course."

"They have gone," was the calm reply.

"Anybody hurt?"

"No; though they chloroformed me and Miss Sykes, which was not right."

"Hev ye called the p'lice?"

"Which policeman?"

"Oh! great ginger arnd blind hosses! what's the use o' talkin' ter you! Hyar, Betty, skip! I warnter make my twilight. Git out quick, in great Caesar's name!"

Betty went, though without haste or excitement. Phil dressed hurriedly and ran down-stairs. Voices were audible in Miss Sykes's living room, and, entering there, he found her and

Betty. Near them was the safe. It had been drawn into the middle of the room, and the door was open.

"Ah! Philip Henry, are you here? I am very glad, for I want your advice," said Miss Sykes.

"Easily given. Let me slide ter the station like a bed-bug on a hot griddle, arnd get a platoon o' p'lice. You've be'n robbed, ain't ye?"

"Yes. Two hundred dollars, and some valuables not in cash, have been taken away. I think it is a shame!"

Miss Sykes was as indignant as was possible for one of her gentle nature, but the loss, in itself, did not seem to worry her much. She had plenty of money, and was not one to break her heart in such a case.

"It's a burnin' shame!" Phil echoed, "but when them cops git hyar they'll sift this thing down fine. I'll go at once, arnd them pestiferous critters shall pay back that 'ere money, arnd beg my pardon fur the way they tied me up, or I'm an Ananias. Assooredly! Keep up yer grit ontel I fetch the brass buttons!"

He flitted out of the house, and when he returned, was accompanied by two policemen. It was easy for him to see how the burglars had entered—they had come in just as Phil had warned Miss Sykes that such characters could come. Once in they had chloroformed Miss Sykes and Betty, and tied up Phil, and then rifled the safe and other parts of the house.

The officers soon decided that if a clew had been left it must be in the shape of footprints in the rear yard—there was nothing of the kind inside. Phil accompanied them to the yard, but soon returned with a long face.

"Miss Sykes, mum, I hev bad news fur you?"

"What is it?"

"The burglars ketched some o' yer cats out promenardin', I reckon, fur one o' the helpless innocents lays out in the yard, foully assick-sinated—deader'n a curb-stone. Poor Hannibawl is the victim. Miss Sykes, mum, it don't matter now whether he had typhoid fever or rhoumatiz."

"My poor friend! The dreadful men!" cried the old lady, far more shocked than when she found her money missing.

Phil consoled her all that he could, and the murder of Hannibal was dismissed for the time as the policemen came in to report. They had not been able to find any footprints whatever, and they suggested that they go out and interview patrolmen on neighboring beats, and resume the search at the house, if necessary, in the morning.

Nobody objected, and the policemen went, but Phil did not again retire. He kept guard all night, wishing that the burglars would return. He little suspected what would be the results of the visit already made by them.

CHAPTER X.

A GIRL'S STRANGE WHIM.

Two weeks passed, and though it was a period of time which made its impression in various ways, nothing occurred which need be described here in detail.

Miss Sykes's burglars had not been found. The captain of the precinct took hold of the case with zeal, but nothing came of it.

Five Points Phil remained in the house, and had accomplished at least two things. He had won Miss Sykes's confidence and regard, and the deep enmity of the harpies—Miss Frazer and Mr. Maudston. In him they saw a shrewd friend of the old lady—he was dangerous—they hated him.

Tim Thistle had not found a trace of Captain Tiger, Jed Jackley or the other members of the gang. He had watched at the window, and hunted outside, but all in vain.

Neither had Stella Fielding's jewels been found. Derriby, Mr. Maudston's detective, made a good deal of show, but he did not find the jewels or the thieves. Maudston still expressed confidence in him, but a change had come over Mr. Maudston. He was looking haggard, and was morose and nervous. Something must have occurred to disturb him—business cares, probably. In any case, he was ill at ease and troubled about something.

Mr. Elbert Bainbridge had kept his threat and put the experienced detective before referred to upon the track, but he had not restored the jewels. If he had made any discoveries, he did not reveal them to even Harry Shelby.

The most noticeable matter of these two weeks was the growth of the friendship between Shelby and Stella. The former had "called again," not once only, but several times, and it became an evident fact that the young people were very much interested in each other.

Mr. Maudston tolerated, rather than encour-

aged this, but Elbert Bainbridge did more. He arranged matters so that Stella could visit his house without the least breach of decorum, and when there she and Harry had no Argus-eyed watchers to disturb their interviews.

Stella had been admitted to the secret that Bainbridge had put another detective on the trail of the jewels—his name, in this story, may be put down as Brown—and she had held several interviews with him, giving such information as he desired.

At the end of two weeks Bainbridge felt sure that his hopes would be realized; that Harry and Stella would finally marry. The time of her stay in New York was limited, so Harry made the most of it, and advanced as far as he would otherwise have done in two months, or more.

One evening he called upon her at Maudston's, and, before he went away, drew a brown box from his pocket.

"May I ask you to accept a small present from me?" he said, with a light air.

She touched the spring of the box, and the cover flew up. A satin-lined interior was revealed, and minute bluish-white rays of light seemed to shoot forth to meet her. There lay a diamond pin and pair of earrings.

Stella's cheeks flushed, and when her eyes were raised to Shelby's face, they sparkled almost as much as the diamonds.

"These—do you mean—are they for me?"

"For you, Stella."

"But they will eclipse me entirely. I never wore diamonds, even when I had some of my own—I mean those that were stolen."

"Eclipse you! Never! I can only say that some new gem ought to be found just for you, rarer even than these."

"Now, you flatter me."

"That is impossible."

"I haven't the heart to dispute you; you are so kind. But these diamonds—I don't know how to thank you, they are so splendid."

"The simplest of thanks will repay me well," Shelby declared.

"You are as kind as ever, and—I thank you a thousand times. They are beautiful."

She had lifted the jewels and was examining them with all the rapt interest and admiration which her sex bestow on such things, and they glittered and gleamed as only diamonds can.

But the diamonds did more. Shelby was encouraged to speak plainly, and before he went away that night he had asked her to become his wife, and had received a favorable reply. The evening bade fair to be a memorable one.

He walked home like one treading an aerial way, so oblivious was he to all around him; but he did not think of the diamonds again until he had retired. Then he had a really practical thought.

"I hope these jewels will not be stolen, as the others were."

The idea troubled him for a moment, and he wished that he had cautioned her, but finally dismissed the matter. It was not likely that his gift would be molested.

It had taken some little sacrifice on his part to buy them. In his own name he had no money, though his uncle's purse, as before stated, was always open to him. In making this present to Stella, he had felt that he must give her something that would be his gift in the full sense of the word; so, instead of asking Mr. Bainbridge for money, he had denied himself certain things which had seemed necessary, and purchased the diamonds.

The money had been the income of a suit he had conducted in court, and there was satisfaction in using it.

But what if Stella lost the jewels?

When she appeared at the table the next morning, her looks and manner seemed to have changed. Maudston noticed it at once, and asked if she was ill. She replied that she had not slept as well as usual, having suffered with a headache, and then tried to dismiss the subject.

Maudston humored her, but continued to use his eyes. It was clear to him that something was wrong.

He went away after breakfast, and circumstances indicated that Stella was glad to see him go. Half an hour later she, too, left the house, going out when Mrs. Maudston was not near, and hastened away.

She went directly to Irving Place, called at a certain house, inquired for a certain person, and was soon in the presence of a keen-eyed man of middle age. This was Brown, the detective engaged by Mr. Bainbridge to find the stolen jewels.

He greeted her pleasantly, and then suddenly added:

"What is wrong, Miss Fielding? Are you ill?"

Stella made a slight, but impatient, gesture. The repetition of Mr. Maudston's inquiry did not seem to please her.

"I am not, except that I suffered last night with a severe headache, and lost sleep thereby. I have come to see you on business, Mr. Brown."

"Concerning the lost jewels?"

"Yes."

"A shall be glad to consult. Anything new?"

Stella's face bore a firm expression, but she did not meet Brown's gaze with her usual frankness. Her own gaze was averted.

"I wish to say, Mr. Brown, that I am very well satisfied with the way you have conducted the case, and to thank you for your zeal; but I have decided not to have any further search made, believing that it will be best otherwise, so I wish to say, with repeated thanks to you, that you need devote no more time to the case."

The detective sat looking at the girl wonderingly. He did not mind the dismissal, for he had plenty of other work, and had only taken this case to oblige Harry Shelby, but he knew at once that there was far more in the dismissal than was visible on the surface.

"Isn't this a sudden decision?" he slowly asked.

"Not particularly."

"Have you recovered the jewels?"

"No, sir."

"Have you given up hope of recovering them?"

"Yes."

"But I told you, yesterday, that you should have them back."

"I have changed my mind," Stella answered, nervously.

"In what way?"

"I have decided to have the search abandoned."

"But I am sure this would not please Mr. Bainbridge and Harry Shelby."

"The jewels were *mine*," said Stella, more firmly.

"True; but I am employed by *them*."

"I think that I have a right to say whether the search for my own property shall go on," and the girl's manner became both peremptory and defiant.

"That is true, but—"

The detective ceased speaking, and, while keenly studying her face, also analyzed the position she had assumed. He knew that something new and unexpected had occurred; that she desired to have the search abandoned without explanation; that she was nervous and troubled; but all his professional intuition did not help him to understand her motives. In his long career he had seen other persons act like this, but they were those who had a guilty secret to conceal.

"It is hardly satisfactory to me to have the case dropped without knowing *why* it must be so."

"Call it my whim, Mr. Brown."

"A strange whim," he dryly replied.

"No doubt; but what can you expect of a woman?"

She said this with an attempt at pleasantry, and then abruptly rose. For reasons best known to herself she felt that she had endured this interview as long as she could, and she was painfully anxious to get away at once. Somewhat to her surprise, the detective did not oppose her departure, and she went, carrying her secret, whatever it was, with her.

The detective conducted her out as politely as though nothing unusual had occurred, and they parted at the door the best of friends, it seemed.

Brown, however, watched her as she walked up the street, a thoughtful frown on his face.

"There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our simple philosophy. Now, here is a little woman with a secret—one which pains and troubles her sorely. She refuses to have her jewels restored. Why? Possibly I shall never know, but unless Shelby unites with her in dismissing me, I *will* know. I'll call on him at once. Here is a tremendous mystery, and I am bound to solve it!"

CHAPTER XI.

TIM THISTLE ACTS THE RESCUER.

"At last!"

Tim Thistle breathed, rather than spoke, the words in a tone of exultation. He was sitting at the window of his room where he had sat so much, of late, watching—always watching—for Leonidas Palgrave. The patience which he had exhibited had been something remarkable in one so young, and more like that of an Indian.

Yes, his watching was at last rewarded; Palgrave had appeared and entered the next house.

His manner showed that he had no especial fear of danger, and it was clear that he had kept out of sight so long, not because he knew that Tim Thistle was on his track, but from more natural causes.

"He's in, but what am I ter do?" mused the boy. "Will he stay dere, or come out ag'in? Dat's de question!"

It was an important one in his mind, for upon it depended his own course. If Palgrave was to go away again at once, the Tartar wished to be on the street and follow him. If he was to remain in his room, the boy had a way planned for spying upon him.

The two houses in the question were of one building, so to speak, and Palgrave's and Tim's rooms were side by side, with only the brick wall between them. Furthermore, each window had a small balcony, and the two were not over four feet apart.

Believing that he might some time wish to listen at Palgrave's window, Tim had long before conveyed to his own room a board which, laid upon the two balconies, would bridge the intervening distance.

Hence his present anxiety to know what Palgrave intended to do.

While he hesitated he saw something more. The burly form of Tip Higgins loomed up, with another man as his companion, and the two advanced and entered the next house.

"Dat settles it!" cried the Tartar. "They're goin' in ter see de cap'n, an' it's meself will hear what they say ef it's in de books. Look out, ye schemers! I'm a-comin'!"

He hurried across the room and drew the board from its place of concealment under the bed; he carried it to the window; he crawled out upon the balcony; he carefully placed the board upon the two balconies in the bridge form before mentioned.

It was an exceedingly narrow bridge, and a fall therefrom would doubtless prove fatal.

He scarcely seemed to give this a thought, but crawled lightly and quickly along the board. He reached the second balcony; tested and found it firm; and was then ready for the next act in the drama. The window-shade was down, as he had expected, and the lower sash was raised; all seemed favorable for his venture.

The sound of voices inside was very plain, and with all the caution possible, he moved one side of the shade a little.

Palgrave, Higgins and the other man were seated at a table, talking earnestly.

"I wish to bring one matter to your attention at once," said Captain Tiger. "I refer to Jed Jackley."

"That feller is a blamed traitor!" declared Higgins, thumping the table angrily.

"Just my idea."

"He may deny it all he sees fit, but I b'lieve 'twas him that sot that infarnal boy enter us."

"Beyond a shadow of doubt," answered Captain Tiger, "he hired the lad to follow me, and if I had not been on the alert he would have learned too much. The boy was a keener. Wonder what has become of him?"

"Don't b'lieve he'll come mousin' round me no more," said Tip, with a grin.

"I am not so sure of that; you can't tell what a boy will do. That chap was sharp and shrewd. However, we won't talk of him any more; probably he has no idea where we are now."

If Mr. Leonidas Palgrave had seen the small, eager face at the window he would not have been so sure of that, but Tim Thistle only allowed a small section of his face to be visible—he was watching with one eye only.

"But about Jackley," resumed the burglar captain. "I regard this man as treacherous—dangerous."

"Looks like it," replied the third burglar, "yet he worked manfully when we did the job at the old maid's house. He opened the safe well and carefully, and cautioned us not to leave any trail in the yard. He held the sponge to chloroform both Miss Sykes and the servant."

Tim Thistle's eyes gleamed; he had made one discovery, anyhow; he knew who committed the burglary of which Five Points Phil had told him.

"All this was natural," Palgrave replied. "Let us admit that he did contemplate treachery. Well, events occurred which threw suspicion upon him. How could he better remove that suspicion than by doing the next job in A1 shape?"

"That's sound reasonin'," quoth Higgins, with an emphatic nod. "Jackley's guilty, Hobbs; don't ye think otherwise?"

"I'm not opposing Captain Tiger," replied Hobbs, looking nervously at that person. "What the captain says, goes. Jed's case does look bad."

"I'm in favor of putting him under restraint," said Palgrave.

"How?"

"Confine him in this room."

"Kin it be done?"

"Why not?"

"First, the folkses o' the house might kick—"

"They will not. I know their way, and for a few dollars they will hold Jackley in a vise-like grip until we find a better place for him—or silence him!"

The tone in which the last words were pronounced brought an involuntary shiver to Tim Thistle's form. He was dealing with a desperate man; woe be to him if he was detected.

"But it strikes me this is a mighty poor prison," Hobbs observed, looking around.

"We will tie Jackley up, gag him, bind him to the bed, and let him rest. He won't give any alarm, I think, and in a day or two I will remove him to a safer place."

"That'll work."

"Are you with me?"

"I am," said Hobbs.

"So be it," added Higgins.

"Hark! I hear footsteps. I think he's coming. Keep mum!"

A peculiar knock sounded at the door. Palgrave arose and opened it, and Jed Jackley entered. He spoke to all the other men bluffly, and assumed the air of one whose conscience is clear, but even to Tim Thistle it was evident that he was ill at ease and nervous.

He took the fourth seat at the table, and a brief, ominous silence followed. Jackley brushed his hand across his face, and remarked that the room was very warm.

"Hadn't I better raise the shade?" he added, glancing toward the window.

Tim Thistle heard the question with dismay. If this was done all his hopes were ruined, to say the least, and there was no knowing what Captain Tiger would do with one twice detected as a spy. The Tartar breathed freer as he heard Palgrave's reply.

"No; let the shade alone. I don't hold conference here with uncurtained windows, so that every prying old woman can look across the yards and see us. Not much! Jed Jackley, I have a word to say to you!"

His voice had grown hard, and Jackley changed color perceptibly. He wished then that he had curbed his idle curiosity, and been content to let Captain Tiger remain an unknown.

"Circumstances," continued the burglar captain, "lead me to believe that you are not what you should be. You have been a member of my band for some time, and I have regarded you as an average man. Recently, however, you evidently decided that you ought to be better informed. In leading the band I have been visible only on the surface. I marked the game and you bagged it, but, while you suspected that I was leading a double life, you did not know anything about me except that I was Captain Tiger. You, Jackley, led by undue, womanish curiosity, set a boy to dog me—"

"I deny it; I never did!"

Jackley spoke vehemently, while his pale, perspiration-dotted face told of great alarm.

"We believe you did."

"Cap'n, I swar that I ain't guilty!"

"Of course you do; you would be a fool to confess. Well, without arguing the case further—I positively decline to do so—let me say that we have weighed all the testimony, and—we find you guilty."

Jackley broke out into wild, energetic protestations, but the leader cut him short.

"No words!" he ordered. "Don't think that your miserable life is in danger, for it is not; I am no assassin, and would scorn to kill such a creature as you, anyhow. This much I do propose to do, however: The interests of the band demand that you be kept a prisoner for a week or so, and we propose to tie you up, bind you to yonder bed, and leave you here awhile. You will be a prisoner, but food and water will be freely given you."

As Palgrave spoke, he removed a coil of small rope from under his coat, and cast it upon the table, and then he drew a revolver and held it where all could see.

"Bind the man!" he said.

Jackley did not have the courage to fight three men, with Palgrave's revolver already drawn, and he could only yield quietly and hope for the best. He was bound to the bed and gagged, being rendered wholly helpless. This done, the captain repeated his assertion that no bodily harm would be done him. He must remain there alone, a prisoner, but he would be properly fed and, in due time, set free under conditions to be named later.

When all had been said, Palgrave, Higgins and Hobbs departed. Jackley was left alone in the room, but not quite so deserted as he thought. Tim Thistle was near, and full of activity and ideas.

The Tartar had determined to release Jed at once, if he could, but some caution was necessary. He first retreated to his own room, and watched to see if Palgrave and his other men really left the house. He had the satisfaction of seeing them come out and walk away, and then he hastened back over the balcony bridge.

Jackley looked very much astonished when he saw the small boy crawl into the window, but a look of hope suddenly flashed over his coarse face as he recognized Tim. He tried to speak, but only produced an indistinct mumbling.

The Tartar, however, promptly liberated him, and, holding up a warning finger, spoke before Jed could do so.

"Hush! not a word. It's yer life depends on silence now. Foller me, an' I'll git ye out ave this."

Jed hesitated at sight of the aerial bridge, but, his fear of Captain Tiger was so great, he was ready to run any danger to get away from him. He crawled along the board, feeling the balconies tremble under his weight, and was soon in Tim Thistle's room.

Then he grasped the young rescuer's hand with effusive gratitude:

"By George, boy, you're a trump keerd! I thought I's gone fur sure, but you've pulled me outer the fire, so ter speak. Ef you ever want a friend, say so, an' I'll shed the last drop o' my blood fur ye, by thunder!"

"I want one now," quoth Tim.

Jed's ardor suddenly cooled, as though touched by frost.

"Eh? You do? In what way?"

"I've helped ye out ov yer fix, an' now I want you ter tell all ye know about Cap'n Tiger an' de Sykes robbery."

The burglar's eyes opened widely.

"Say, wouldn't ye like the hull State o' New York?" he asked.

"All I want is what I tol' ye," Tim quietly replied. "Till what I said ter a detective, or magistrate, an' I'll ax no more."

"Modest, you be, by thunder! Want me ter git myself inter Sing Sing, don't yer?"

"De gang has gone back on ye; why shouldn't yez do de same?"

"Because I won't, that's why."

"You must!" said Tim, with sudden firmness.

"I'm int'rested in this case, an' bound ter see it through. Ef you don't do what I ask, it's meself will hand yez over ter a p'liceman, an' den it'll be too late ter turn State's evidence."

"You'll hand me over?" growled Jackley, viciously.

"Yis, I will!" the Tartar doggedly replied.

"You forgit we are in this room, all alone!" the burglar hissed. "Try ter molest me, an' I'll strangle ye like the young hound ye be!"

"That's all right, but I ain't scared," the boy firmly answered. "I mean business. Will ye do ez I said, or shall I call a p'liceman?"

CHAPTER XII.

STELLA TELLS THE SECRET.

HAVING arrived at a decision, Brown, the detective, acted promptly. He went to Mr. Bainbridge's house, and was soon in the presence of Harry Shelby.

"Glad to see you, Brown," said the young man.

"Is there any news?"

"I suppose you mean in regard to Miss Fielding's jewels?" the detective grimly answered.

"Certainly."

"Allow me to ask when you saw the young lady last?"

"Last evening."

"Were her jewels mentioned?"

"Casually, perhaps, but not particularly."

"Did she say anything about abandoning the search for them?"

Shelby looked very much surprised.

"Certainly not," he answered.

"Well, she came to me this morning and requested—almost commanded—that the search be wholly and permanently discontinued, and the jewels allowed to go."

"Surely, Brown, you are jesting."

"I surely am not."

"Then this is the most incomprehensible thing I ever heard of. Stella asked to have the search abandoned? You must have dreamed it—but, excuse me; I have no right to say that. I am, however, amazed. Pray tell me everything just as it occurred."

Brown obeyed. He told of Stella's visit and her directions to him, and being resolved to make a clean breast of it, he described minutely the signs which had led him to believe that she was in mental trouble of some sort.

"I can't understand it at all," he said, in bewilderment.

"Nor I," Brown grimly replied.

"What is to be done?"

"Do you want me to leave the trail?"

"That, of course, must be as she says," Harry answered, after a brief hesitation; "but, by Jove, it don't please me to see the case go to the dogs. I'll see her, and learn what she means."

"Now you talk sensibly, though I am not so sure that you will learn. You can, of course, try. I would advise you to go at once to Maudston's house and see her, and I'll wait at my home for your return, or for a call."

"It shall be done."

Shelby was soon ready, and they left the house and proceeded to carry out their plan. They parted at the corner of Irving place and Seventeenth street, and Brown looked thoughtfully after the younger man.

"If it is as I suspect, I don't believe he will learn anything; and all signs, old and recent, point that way. I believe—but never mind; we'll see what comes of his call."

Shelby soon reached the Maudston house, and was ushered into Stella's presence. His coming was evidently a surprise to her, and he noticed that she changed color perceptibly. More than this, her greeting was far from warm, but when he noticed how ill and troubled she looked, he was willing to overlook this. When he referred to her illness, however, she interrupted him almost angrily, insisting that she was well. He overlooked this rebuff, also, but it made his manner seem grim and somewhat inexorable as he spoke of the subject nearest his mind.

"Stella, I have seen Brown, the detective."

She flashed him a quick glance, but said nothing.

"He tells me that you want the search for your jewels discontinued."

Still she was silent.

"May I ask why this is so?"

"Mr. Shelby, I wish you would go away—never mention this to me again—never see me again."

Her voice was tremulous, but the words were such that Harry remained almost stupefied with amazement. Not until then had he thought of connecting himself with the mystery, or dreamed that it was anything that could affect him, or place a barrier between them.

"In heaven's name," he cried, "what do you mean? Why do you speak like this? What has happened that you should tell me never to see you again?"

"Don't ask me—don't seek an explanation. All I ask is that you will go, and—leave me to myself."

"Stella, do you want to drive me mad?"

"Drive you mad," she echoed, almost wildly. "Who stands in the greatest danger of that you or I?"

"Heaven knows—I don't. I am dumfounded, unnerved and bewildered; I am like one in the dark. Stella, why—why will you not explain?"

His voice was full of sharp pain, and the girl looked at him wonderingly. Her face softened; she looked uncertain and undecided.

"Can't you understand that I know *all*?" she slowly asked.

"And can't you understand that I know *nothing*? Will you explain this wretched mystery?"

Stella's cheeks suddenly flushed deeply. A new expression came to her face, and she sunk into a chair.

"I am afraid I have made a terrible mistake!" she said, more tremulously than ever.

"Tell me all," he repeated.

"You may hate me when I do."

"Never!"

"But what if I have wronged you?"

"Then I shall have the pleasure of forgiving you."

Stella burst into tears; freshly alarmed, Shelby tried to console her; she insisted that she had wronged him beyond measure; he vowed that she had not; the more he said to console her the more she wept; and matters were progressing on a very emotional and dramatic plan when he finally succeeded in calming her somewhat.

"Now for the secret!" he said, kindly.

"Harry, you remember the diamonds you gave me last night?"

"Yes."

"They are the identical ones that were stolen from me when I came to New York!"

Silence followed the announcement. Shelby was really dumfounded at last, and words utterly failed him. It was Stella who broke the significant pause.

"When you gave them to me I noticed that the stones were very much like my old ones, though the settings were entirely different, but I made no comment upon the fact then. When I was alone in my room, however, I discovered the truth. They are my old diamonds, and a part of those stolen from me!"

"Impossible!" Shelby cried. "They have but just been imported from Europe."

"Harry, I can swear that they are what I say. The shape of the gems has not been changed in the least, and there are marks upon them—minute peculiarities—which have been familiar to me since I was a child. I am not deceived."

"Then by Jupiter, I have been!" Shelby exclaimed. "I bought them of a man who claims to be a diamond importer. If he is not that, he is an ally of thieves!"

"That is it; but, oh! can you forgive me?" Stella asked.

"Forgive you? For what? Ha! I see—you thought that I was an ally of the thieves, or knowing to the robbery!"

"I was mad—mad!"

Practical-minded Shelby thought so himself, but he refrained from confessing it, and vowed to the contrary. If Stella had not used the best judgment

she had, at least, shown all of woman's usual devotion when she decided to keep the secret and save Harry from trouble and suspicion. Considering that she had known him but two weeks, it was but strange that, when the stolen diamonds were brought back to her, she should for the time think that he had guilty knowledge of them, and had given them to her in the belief that she would not recognize them.

This misunderstanding was satisfactorily explained and forgiven, and when peace was fully restored, Stella brought out the diamonds, and they lay sparkling and glittering before their eyes.

Yes, they were there, but a most important question now arose: What was their history from the time that Stella put them in the basket until Shelby purchased them from the alleged importer? Within that space of time they had been reset by somebody. Who? Clearly, the "importer" was not the honest man he had seemed.

"We will send for Brown!" observed Shelby.

Brown was sent for; he came. His eyes glittered as he heard the explanation.

"This is a fine case," he observed, with a nod.

"We have the whole game in our grasp. Our 'importer,' if not the thief, himself—and, for certain reasons, I'll wager something he is not—is an ally of the thieves; a 'fence,' or the agent of a fence. Beginning with him, we must trace the jewels back."

"The case looks hopeful now," observed Shelby.

"Hopeful! I should say so; it's a sure thing."

"Have you a theory?" inquired Stella.

"We shall see," was the evasive reply. "How many persons have you told of the recovery of these sparklers?"

"Only you two."

"Then I want your sacred promise that you will tell no one else—not a soul. Only on this condition will I stay in the case, but if I do stay in, I am going to make the whole mystery plain as day!"

CHAPTER XIII.

PHIL FINDS SOMETHING.

FIVE POINTS PHIL had been two weeks at Miss Sykes's residence, and it had been a period of peculiar experience to him. At no time had he been obliged to work hard, but the old lady never tired of talking with him about the cats. These objects of her solicitude occupied nearly all her time when she was not making out checks, at the solicitation of Mr. Maudston and Miss Frazer, for cats and women in general, and Phil's ready help and sympathy were most pleasant to her.

He could by that time call every cat by name, though the way he pronounced the names was as eccentric as ever, and his humorous fancy led him to do many queer things which Miss Sykes saw only in a serious light. One of his notions was to take the big book, in which their names were recorded, and "call the roll" every day, answering for each cat as he did so.

Queer as this proceeding was, Miss Sykes viewed it seriously, and approved of it.

Phil did not forget his expressed purpose of putting an end to the vampire operations of Maudston and Miss Frazer, and though he "made haste slowly," he had not failed to do something toward weakening their grasp upon their prey. Having so completely gained the old lady's affection, this was not difficult. She never seemed to remember that he was a boy. In a vague way she realized that he had a good deal of worldly wisdom, and paid as much attention to what he said as though his head had been as gray as hers.

The vultures saw his increasing power with manifest alarm. From the first they hated him, and, boy that he was, they feared him. Betty, the servant, was devoted to Miss Sykes, but she was no more dangerous than a machine, which she so much resembled.

Phil, however, was wide awake; he had brains. Such a person was dangerous to them, and they knew it.

Their hatred showed itself in numberless innuendoes intended to injure him, but he saw with pleasure that Miss Sykes did not turn against him, but, on the contrary, mildly resented their covert attacks.

Then Miss Frazer adopted a new course. She called often, and her spiked cane waved and glittered for hours every day. She preached woman's rights and wrongs persistently, loudly, tirelessly, and flung in slurs against Five Points Phil as she went along. She was resolved to storm the fort.

Phil saw this with serene composure. He noticed that Miss Sykes grew sober when Miss Frazer came, and brightened when she went away. Looking over the field like a shrewd general, the boy saw that the female vulture was likely to defeat herself unaided. She was making herself a nuisance, and good Miss Sykes could not bear it forever.

One day Miss Frazer called when the hostess was making her toilet in her sleeping-room, and Phil, having ushered the visitor into the living-room, gallantly proceeded to entertain her in the best of style.

"Fine day, mum," he remarked, genially.

"It is a wretched, rainy day," severely replied Miss Frazer.

"I meant, fine day in-doors."

"Why didn't you say what you meant?"

"Must 'a' been some error in the time-table, mum."

"You need not explain; I see how it is," declared Miss Frazer, glaring at him inexorably. "The young of vipers will become full-grown vipers. You are a boy, and you will become a man. That explains all!"

She waved the cane until the spike glittered in a way suggesting a sorcerer's weapon, and severely added:

"How dared you be born a boy? How dared you be born one of those wretched, heartless creatures who oppress down-trodden woman? The monster, Man, is the evil-genius of the world; the light of happiness; the demon in incarnate form; the bane of poor woman's life. In all probability, you will grow up to be a man, if you live. How dare you do this?—how dare you?"

And she shook the cane dangerously near Phil's nose.

"I'm awful sorry, mum," the boy answered, with mock gravity. "Can't you help me, somehow? I hate ter be a devourin' monster when I grow up, and worry women folkses. Say, s'posen I git the Legislature ter change my name ter Sally Ann Jerusha Jones? Hey?"

"Boy, do you mock me?"

"Not a mock! Assooredly not. I ain't that sort o' a pestiferous monster, Marm. Fax is fax, and they're stubborn things."

"It is useless to talk of a change of name; you are what you are, and I suspect that you will be one of the worst of your domineering sex. Yes, you will domineer and grind down poor woman until my sweet sex can vote. Then, sir—then we will reduce the male vipers to the level where they belong—among the four-footed brutes of the earth!"

"Melancholy jee! I bleed at heart fur the monster, Marn! What a pestiferous critter he is, though. One o' yer meek arnd lovely dispersion must shrink from sech wickedness."

"I shrink from nothing. I represent injured womanhood!" was the lofty reply.

"Arnd you're the fairest o' yer sex, mum."

"Beware, boy! I mistrust your oily tongue," and she looked at him suspiciously.

"Thar ain't a bit o' ile onter it, Miss Blazer. What! do ye s'pose I'd hev the ordacity ter poke fun at one o' yer gigantic brain? Never, mum! The monster, Marn, ain't no show with you! I wish all yer sex was like ye, by ginger!"

"They be; and we are a sweet, persecuted class. The monster, Man, is after us."

"Don't ye run an inch, Miss Blazer. Stan' yer ground arnd slay the critter. Punch him in the eye with yer cane. Fire a few ballots at him. Vote fur the oppersition candidate. Make stump speeches ag'in' him. Miss Blazer, mum, I'd re'lly like ter see you on the stump!"

Phil's face glowed with enthusiasm, and he gesticulated wildly. His eyes were upturned, as though he saw the stern champion of woman's rights even then upon the stump, pouring forth fiery eloquence and irrefutable arguments.

"The day is coming when women will vote," said Miss Frazer, impelling the spike of her cane almost to Phil's nose.

"Assooredly!"

"When it does come every woman will cast two ballots."

"One fur each candidate? Capital idee; nobody but a woman could 'a' thought it out."

"Boy, be silent! You only mock me. You think that you can pull the wool over my eyes, since you are a male viper, but my woman's wit thwarts you. Your vile scheme fails. Ha! another argument to use at my next address before the League!"

"Dish it up, mum; Give it breath! Wade in arnd sling yer elerquence ter the four winds. Slash the monster, Marn, all ter pieces. Elerquence? You're it, arnd it's you. Oh! I'll bet that when you've got a speech ter hummin' thar i brimstone in the air, by ginger!"

Phil was waxing more excited and enthusiastic, and there is no knowing to what point he would have reached if Betty had not come to announce that Miss Sykes would see the visitor in her private room. The eloquent champion of woman's rights went out with a rattle and clatter of her spiked cane, while Phil dropped into a chair and laughed until the tears ran from his eyes.

"She's a good 'un, is Miss Blazer; never see'd nobody like her afore. How lonesome the House o' Freaks would be 'thout her! Thar ain't one in the Menagerie that makes more reel fun than that charmin' critter. Don't see how th- monster, Marn, kin resist her allocrements. Arnd they won't long, neither. I'll bet su'thin' thart ef Miss Blazer lives a hundred year longer she'll be a legal voter, arnd—Hello! what's that?"

He stooped and picked up something from the floor.

It was a gold ring, with some kind of purplish-hued stone.

"Jewelry, hey? Rain o' gold arnd precious stones, eh? Good! let the deluge cortinn'r; I kin stand it. This is a pooty thing ter hev in the fam'ly."

He examined it critically, turning it over and over. Then he glanced up at the ceiling with one of his odd conceits.

"Didn't come through the plasterin', ev'dently; can't be none o' my jewels. No; they're all down at Macdougall street, hid in the coal-ben. Say, Miss Blazer dropped this!"

Just then Betty called to him from the rear room. He went to her aid, and was busy several minutes. When he returned Miss Sykes was in the living room, but alone.

"Mum, whar's Miss Blazer?" he asked.

"Miss Frazer has gone."

"Sorry fur that, fur I wanted ter see her partic'lar. Found a vallyble jewel on the floor; reckon it's her'n."

He extended the ring, and Miss Sykes examined it as he had done not long before.

"It is not valuable," she said. "The stone is an amethyst, and, probably, not worth over five dollars. It must be Miss Frazer's, and we will return it to her when she calls again."

"Whar shall I put it?"

"Keep it in your pocket!" said Miss Sykes, quickly. "I don't want charge of any other person's valuables, after the visit of those terrible burglars. Keep it for her, yourself."

"Assooedly,"

"Philip," suddenly continued Miss Sykes, "what is your opinion of Miss Frazer?"

The boy looked at her sharply.

"Ain't you kinder got a dim idee o' what I think on her?"

"You have certainly spoken against her," the old lady replied, with a faint smile, "even though you have never been definite."

"I'll be definite now, assooedly. I think that high-strung female is a fraud and swindler. I suspect that the money she gets from you stays right in her pocket, but whether it does or not she's swindlin' you systematic. So is Seth Mudstone. Neither on 'em cares a cent fur you—it's yer money. They're blood-suckers, they be; and you give ter them o' yer money while the poor o' New York goes hungry and cold!"

Phil was speaking very earnestly, and his right hand waved widely in the air. He was very much in earnest.

"Miss Sykes," he went on, "ef thar is a good, honest soul livin', you're her; but you're 'lowin' yerself ter be imposed on by cut-throats. T'other day Miss Blazer got a check outer ye fur ter pay fur hev'in' a lot o' ballots printed, so that women folkses, even ef they couldn't vote, could hev one framed and hung up in their parlor. Yes, and while you was writin' it, the sewin'-women o' New York was makin' shirts fur nothin', or a trifle up'ards, a dozen. Mum, I b'lieve them women would rather hev a barrel o' flour, or a ton o' coal, than the pootiest-framed ballot ever printed. I do, by ginger!"

The young orator came to a stop, but remained with his right arm outstretched, as though he were pointing to the unfortunate creatures whose cause he was espousing.

Miss Sykes looked startled, and gazed at Phil as though a new Demosthenes had suddenly been discovered. She had heard that which might well startle her, and though it was contrary to all her old ideas, something told her that there was truth in the whole that he had said.

"I have not looked at it in this light," said she, in great bewilderment.

"It's the true light—it assooedly is. Look now, and don't let them pestiferous critters victimize ye any longer."

"Do you think Mr. Maudston a swindler, too?"

"I do."

"Then I have given away a good deal of money to evil persons."

"You'll never find a better time nor this ter stop, mum."

"I am more than half inclined to think you are right. Of late these two persons have worried me. Their bickerings in my presence are like—like—"

"Two buzzards fightin' fur a wounded sheep."

"The simile is not a bad one, I think. Yes, I am tiring of them, and—well, I will see about them before I make out another check."

"Glory and ch-win' gum! now you please me."

"For now we will dismiss the subject, however. I have an errand for you to do; I want a note carried to Mr. Maudston. Don't be afraid; there is no check in it. Go, and, if you get a chance, enter the house, look around, and tell me your impression of his household."

"I'll size things up ef I kin. Anyhow, I know Mudstone is the kind o' a critter who smiles and is a villain still."

Phil received the note and started for Maudston's. Another sensation was about to occur.

CHAPTER XIV.

TIM THISTLE'S DISCOVERY.

JED JACKLEY looked at the Tartar as though anxious to fall upon him and tear the boy to pieces.

"Youngster, you don't know what ye're talkin' about!" he said, with his ugliest scowl.

"Wal, I'm talkin' jest de same," Tim answered.

"You'd call a policeman ter 'rest me, would ye?"

"That's jest what I'll do ef you don't go wid me an' make a clean breast ave it. Ef you'll turn State's evidence, all right; ef not, I'll call de officer."

"You're a bold young game-cock ter stand alone with me in this room, an' say that. Why, ef I's ter fall on ye, I could t'ar ye all ter pieces."

Tim Thistle deliberately drew a revolver.

"Hyar's an article I picked up in yer room—think it was Cap'n Tiger's. Thar is six cartridges in de cylinder; ef I's ter p'int it at yez, an' sorter pull de trigger—"

"Hol' on!" cried Jackley. "Turn that durned thing t'other way. We ain't quirriled, hev we?"

"Not yit."

"Give me time ter think."

Jed did think. To do him justice, his common sense—as well as a desire to be revenged on Palgrave—had all the time told him that his most sensible way was to turn informer at once.

"Put up yer barker!" he suddenly directed. "I ain't doin' it 'cause you say so, but I'll tell the hull story."

Tim's face brightened.

"I know a detective by de name ave Brown. Will ye go ter him first?"

"Don't car' who I go ter ef it's the Mayor o' Weehawken. Lead the way, Hop o' my Thumb, an' I'll foller."

They went down-stairs, and the Tartar led the way straight to Irving Place.

Finally they paused before a certain house, and when a servant answered his ring, Tim asked to see "Detective Brown." That gentleman chanced to be at home, and they were soon in his presence. He

did not know either of them, and looked at them inquiringly, but Jed's sense of the absurd suddenly found vent in words.

"Mister, look at me. I'm a poor, weak critter, in the iron grasp o' that Hercules monster!"

He pointed toward Tim, and a grim smile moved his lips.

"How so?" Brown asked.

"Ask him! I'm only a pris'ner. He's the Law, he is!"

"You ain't, by criminy!" retorted Tim. "Mr. Brown, I take it ye don't know me?"

"No, I don't, my lad."

"I've see'd you often, down 'round P'lice Headquarters, an' ilsewhar. But, niver mind. Dere's a man come ter turn State's evidence, in de burglary at de Sykes house."

"Zactly, squire," added Jed. "This infant will give ye partic'lars, an' I'll sw'ar ter them."

Detective Brown perceived that there was something more than idle talk in this, and he proceeded to question them. The result was that he learned everything which Tim Thistle could tell, and all that Jackley saw fit to reveal. How much he kept back there was no way of telling.

When all was said, Brown's information amounted to this: There was an organized band of burglars in New York, of which the leader was one Leonidas Palgrave, alias Captain Tiger. Among other robberies, this band had done the "job" at Miss Dorothea Sykes's, a fortnight before. Who Captain Tiger was, not one of his followers knew.

This was very interesting matter for Brown. It would be no mean feather in his crown to reveal the Sykes burglars, while if he could expose Captain Tiger, it would be still greater glory. Jackley frankly gave Tim Thistle what credit he deserved, and Brown promised to remember the lad's brave efforts.

When he had learned all he took the two out to make sworn statements, and then Tartar was allowed to go. He wended his way, however, feeling well satisfied.

"Wonder what Five Points Phil will say to dat fur a detective job?" he muttered, as he strode along. "He's done siv'ral ave thim, an' now I kin match him. Hello!"

It was no ordinary matter that had brought the last ejaculation from Tim's lips. He had reached Clinton Place, and was about to cross it when he was stopped by a passing street-car. As it went over the crossing, he mechanically looked up. Then it was that he uttered the above-recorded exclamation.

On the rear platform of the car stood Palgrave, the burglar captain.

Instantly Tim Thistle made a resolution—if such a thing was possible, he would follow this man until he learned just who he was.

He began the pursuit by trotting along on the sidewalk, but this mode of pursuit was soon made unnecessary. Palgrave sprang from the car, ascended the steps of an adjacent house, looked about for a moment, and then produced a key and entered.

"Nuther home o' his'n!" muttered the Tartar.

The idea was strong in Tim's mind that Palgrave was in disguise, and that he had only entered this house to change his identity. Such, too, was the natural inference to be drawn from what Jed Jackley had told him. So it now became his cue to hover near until Palgrave came out and, recognizing him by form, face or manner, follow him once more.

This he determined to do.

He was beset with a fear that Captain Tiger would carefully survey the street from the windows of his room, and thereby recognize his young pursuer. This troubled Tim. How was the danger to be averted? He looked about for a good hiding-place, but saw none to his liking.

Suddenly he did see something which gave him an idea.

A young Italian had just entered the street, bearing a hand-organ, and was preparing to deluge the block in music. He was somewhat slow about it, and, before he had begun, Tim's hand fell upon his arm.

"Boss, I'll give yez twenty-five cents to let me play dat instrument here," he said.

The Italian looked in disbelief.

"You joke-a me," he said.

"Not a joke; I mean business, by criminy!" declared the Tartar, eagerly.

"Why you want a play?"

"Never mind. Jest you take de quarter, give me de hand-organ, yer coat an' cap, an' say nothin'."

He displayed the silver coin ostentatiously, and the Italian yielded. He agreed to the proposal, promising to be near and on the watch so that, at a motion from Tim, he could take the musical instrument back. This signal, of course, was to be given when Captain Tiger came out, though Tim did not explain this.

The Italian's coat was too large for him, but it, together with the hat, made a capital disguise, and he felt confident that Palgrave would not recognize him, even he was on the watch for possible danger. Having fully made his preparations, he crossed the street and began playing.

While disguised Tim Thistle played the borrowed instrument he watched the house sharply, but secretly, for signs of the burglar captain.

Would he succeed or fail? This was the all-absorbing question in his mind, but his manner did not once betray the fact that he was anything more than he seemed to be, and he was determined to give the people of that block a good deal of music for their money, if Palgrave was long in coming out.

The Tartar was as persistent as an Indian on the trail.

Mr. Brown, detective, called upon Mr. Bainbridge.

"Well, how goes the battle?" the latter asked.

"As well as I could expect," Brown replied.

"Any new clew?"

"Yes, and no. Perhaps I should say, nothing that you would recognize as a clew, but I am moving on, and only time is needed to complete the work."

"Have you seen that alleged 'importer' of diamonds?"

"I have investigated him, and am convinced that he is the ally of thieves."

"Well, Brown, prosecute the case with all possible zeal; there is more in it than money. I have learned that Stella Fielding relied upon the money to be obtained for her jewels to pay off the mortgage on her father's farm and I have no doubt that it would be a death-blow to him to have the jewels irrevocably lost. Find them, and I'll pay you—even if your bill is as large as the value of the jewels. That dear girl and her old father must not suffer."

Mr. Bainbridge's voice was far from steady as he spoke.

"It sometimes happens," observed Brown, "that such a case as this is far-reaching in its results. Suppose that lightning strikes those of high rank?"

"What do you mean?"

"There is no knowing who may prove to be implicated. Men high in worldly position are not always proof against investigation. It may be so now."

"It makes no difference, Mr. Brown. If such men have sinned, let them pay the penalty."

"You are my employer, and your orders 'go.'"

"Very good. When do you expect to finish the case?"

"Perhaps, before the end of the next day."

"Better still. I dare say you don't want to reveal your case now, but I advise you to investigate the bogus 'importer,' thoroughly."

"Regardless of consequences?"

"Yes."

"All right; I'll do it. You may expect the finale very soon, for I don't mind saying that I know the whole case already. Some minor points are to be investigated, and then I will gather in my game, high and low."

"Excellent! Remember what you work for—Stella Fielding and the old homestead—and show the guilty no mercy."

"All right, Mr. Bainbridge. The end is near!"

CHAPTER XV.

MISS SYKES IS AGITATED.

FIVE POINTS PHIL made his way to Seth Maudston's residence. He was by no means sure how he would be received, for he was well aware that Maudston hated him to an extreme, but it was probable that, as Miss Sykes's messenger, he would have no trouble with the high official of the A. P. C. C.

When he reached the house Maudston was not in, and the boy was shown to the parlor to wait for him. A pretty young lady was sitting there, and Phil, remembering that he was to get "points," let no time go to waste.

"Fine day, miss."

"It is, indeed."

"Should s'pose you'd be out fur a spin in the Park, or a lookin' at the style on Fifth avenoo."

Stella Fielding—for the pretty young lady was she—looked at the boy more attentively. His remark had been a peculiar one, considering they were strangers, but as she marked his quaint, humorous face it seemed appropriate.

"We can't all drive in Central Park," she answered.

"'Twould over-crowd it," Phil seriously replied, and then, without a change of countenance, he abruptly continued: "Be you int'rested in cats?"

Stella smiled, for to her, the question seemed as eccentric as it was unexpected.

"I hardly know; I like them well enough."

"B'long ter the A. P. C. C.?"

"What in the world is that?"

"Association fur the Preventive o' Cruelty ter Cats. You'd orter know ef you live hyar, consid'erin' Mr. Mudstone is High Grand Master o' Cardom, or whatever they call his office."

"I was not aware that my uncle was connected with any such society."

"No? That's queer; it assooedly is, my b'loved contemporary—I mean, miss. Mr. Mudstone, he's a big toad in the puddle; he certainly is? Fax is fax, and they're stubborn."

Phil's eccentric mind took a new turn and he began to fumble in his pocket.

"I observe that ye're wearin' dimunts. Now, I own a few bushel o' vallyble gems, though I don't know one from another. Low me ter inquire the take-nickel name o' this, and its vally. Women-folks is good jedges o' gems, bein' gems themselves."

With this bit of delicate flattery Phil placed in Stella's hand the ring he had found upon the floor at Miss Sykes's immediately after Miss Frazer's departure. His only object was to get the opinion of one he believed would be an expert—he had little faith in Miss Sykes's judgment in such matters—and the result rather surprised him.

Stella looked at the ring—started—looked at it more closely—and then turned her gaze upon Phil quickly.

"Where did you get this?" she demanded.

"Found it on the floor arter Miss Blazer went."

"What floor? Who is Miss Blazer?"

Phil saw by her manner that he had aroused some kind of a storm, but he made the explanation in his most matter-of-fact way, not forgetting to give the Frazer woman a shot as he did so.

"Are you sure that she dropped the ring?" Stella asked.

"Couldn't been nobody else, assooedly."

"Still, you are not sure?"

"Wal, skeercely; but it stan's ter reason that 'twas her."

"Well, this ring was stolen from me!"

Phil's eyes opened widely.

"It was?"

"Yes. Three weeks ago I lost a quantity of jewelry while traveling, and this amethyst ring was one of the lot. I would like to know how that Miss Blazer—if that is her name—came by it."

Stella spoke with all the severity she was capable of, and with increasing excitement, while Five Points Phil sprung to his feet and waved his cap wildly.

"How did she git it? How *could* she git it? Fax is fax, arnd they're stubborn things. That woman couldn't git it but one way, arnd that was ter steal it. Ain't a bit surprised ter hear it o' Miss Blazer. A marn may smile arnd be a villain still, arnd that's the kind o' a chap *she* is."

"My boy, I would like to go to Miss Sykes's with you."

"Great ginger! do it! Yes, come on. Go over arnd see Lunkhead, the Crew-slayer, arnd Low-creature Gorgeous!"

"Who in the world are they?"

"B'loved contemporaries o' Charley Mann arnd Jawer in the Dark. Come over arnd see my Menagerie."

Stella did not venture to go until she had received an explanation of these mysterious remarks; then the note for Mr. Maudston was left on the table, and she went out with Phil as an escort. She recognized the fact that he was a boy to be trusted, or she might not have ventured near the "House of Freaks."

The place was soon reached. Betty received them at the door with machine-like decorum, and in the same systematic style ushered them into Miss Sykes's presence. Once there Phil introduced Stella, and the old lady received her very kindly.

"You will excuse me, miss," she said in a few moments, "if I speak to Philip Henry on a matter of business?"

"Certainly," Stella replied.

"Thanks. Philip, Miss Frazer has been here for a ring."

"Aha! So it reely *was* hern?" and Phil's eyes twinkled.

"Yes."

"She admitted it, hey?"

"Oh, yes; and came to get it. She described it minutely. It seems that she had it in her pocket, and must have lost it by removing her handkerchief. I told her you would return it to her."

"Can't do it, Miss Sykes."

"Why not?" the old lady asked, in surprise.

"Cause Miss Blazer is a pestiferous critter—I mean, a female desperado. She's a thief, mum! She stole that ring, mum! Thar is the reel owner."

He pointed to Stella, while Miss Sykes held up her hands in profound dismay.

"Miss Frazer a *thief*!" she ejaculated.

"Looks like it, arnd thar is no knowin' whar her depravity will bring us ef *she* ain't brung up. Great ginger! she may steal Lunkhead, the Crew-slayer, or the ballots that the female want-ter-be-voters intend ter hev framed fur trophies."

"It seems incredible!" and Miss Sykes looked dazed.

"A man may smile arnd be a villain still, so why not a woman arnd a orator? Miss Blazer advocates woman's rights, arnd I reckon she thinks stealin' is one on 'em."

Miss Sykes turned to Stella and asked for an explanation, and the girl related how her jewels had been lost, keeping back only those later developments which Mr. Brown had directed her to keep secret.

All of Miss Sykes's faith in the Frazer woman vanished. Phil's unpolished, but practical arguments had nearly demolished the temple of delusion, and though, as Stella frankly stated, it was possible that the champion of woman's rights might have come honestly by the ring, no one was inclined to regard this as a fact.

However this might be, all agreed that Miss Frazer ought to be investigated by a detective.

Phil noticed that as Miss Sykes grew calmer she observed Stella very attentively, and the more she looked the more she seemed interested, or impressed by something. Finally she grew actually agitated.

"My dear," she said, abruptly, "I did not understand your name."

"It is Fielding—Stella Fielding," the girl replied.

Miss Sykes started perceptibly.

"Where do you live?" she asked.

Stella named the town.

"I never heard of the place before; but, if you will not think me unduly inquisitive, may I ask your father's name?"

"Certainly," Stella answered. "It is Allan Fielding."

"And your mother?" faintly inquired the old lady.

"Her Christian name is Agatha. Before her marriage her surname was Templeton."

A brief silence followed, but Stella, whose curiosity had been aroused, was looking at Miss Sykes, and was rather alarmed by the old lady's manner. Her face had lost color; her expression was peculiar, and her hands trembled perceptibly.

"I trust that you are not ill," said Stella, quickly.

"No, child, I am not."

Miss Sykes spoke in a low, faint voice, but at once made an effort, and more firmly added: "Not ill, but surprised. I have made a discovery."

"Indeed! May I ask what?"

"This: You, Stella Fielding, are my *grand-niece*!"

Almost total silence followed the assertion. Five Points Phil whispered something which sounded

like, "Great ginger!" but he did not venture to speak aloud. Stella was looking at Miss Sykes in bewilderment.

"I do not wonder that you are surprised," Miss Sykes added, "for I am, myself, amazed. What must it be to you, who probably never heard of me?"

"I never did."

"I told them never to mention my name. Yet your mother, Agatha Templeton, is my niece—I suppose she is yet living?"

"She is, Miss Sykes."

The latter sighed deeply.

"How the past, which seemed to be buried under a mountain's weight, comes back to me! I thought it was all gone, and in the atmosphere of my new life it almost seemed that I had forgotten the old life. Yet I can never forget it, with its lights and shadows. The human heart may be made anew if the circumstances are right, but it needs only a breath of the old fire to start the blood to flowing as of yore. But never mind this. You are like your mother, child; very much like your mother."

"So I am told."

"It was this resemblance which first led me to suspect your identity. Stella, I am a lonely old woman. Would you mind spending a few hours with me, some day, when I send for you?"

"I should be pleased to do so."

"Then I will send Philip Henry over. To-day I scarcely have—have time—to talk."

This was an evasion; Miss Sykes wanted time to recover her composure, and to fully decide on her line of conduct.

Stella arose to go.

"Don't t'ar yerself away until you've see'd our belongin's arnd 'tachment," advised Phil. "Take a look at Jawer in the Dark, arnd Lunkhead, the Crew-slayer."

"He means Joan of Arc, and Tancred, the Crusader," explained Miss Sykes, rallying and smiling.

Stella was accordingly shown this important department of the "Menagerie," much to her wonder, after which she left the house. At her request Five Points Phil agreed to keep the ring for awhile, and he declared that he would take particular pains to keep it from Miss Frazer.

CHAPTER XVI.

GATHERING IN THE GANG.

THREE persons were walking along Avenue A. They were Brown, the detective, Five Points Phil and Tim Thistle. The leader's face bore a determined expression, and the boys were equally in earnest.

"We're 'most there," said the Tartar.

"Yes, and in about ten minutes I expect to have Mr. Tip Higgins in custody," Brown replied.

"Hez it ever 'curred ter you that some o' the rest o' the gang may be thar?" Phil asked.

"There is a chance of that."

"In which case, you'd wish yer had some herculean brass-button gents ter back ye up, 'stead o' two infants like Tim arnd me."

"I worsted Tim Higgins once," declared Tim Thistle, somewhat vexed at being called an "infant."

"Yes, and captured Jed Jackley," Brown added.

"Arnd scooped in Cap'n Tiger—leastways, dogged him ter his home base," Phil supplemented.

"I rank Tim equal to a man," said Brown, smiling good-humoredly, "and you and I are not to be sneezed at, Phil. But I don't anticipate trouble."

They now reached a low, dingy house, and the detective rung the dilapidated bell. This brought a dilapidated-looking servant girl, to whom Brown stated that they were friends of Mr. Higgins, and wished to see him. They were directed to the "second floor, rear."

Brown knocked at the designated door; a voice bade them enter; they obeyed. They saw a low, but wide room in which a single man sat at the table with a half-filled whisky-bottle beside him. This was not Higgins, but it was no stranger to Tim, being Briggs, Higgins's assistant at the saloon.

The Tartar whispered to Brown, revealing the man's identity.

"Where's Tip?" the detective asked.

"Gone out fur a minute, but 'll come back d'reckly. Set down an' be miser'ble. Step up ter the bottle an' hev some fodder. Whisky's free ez water. Help yerself ter chairs—excuse me fur sayin' it, but I'm tired an' can't git up."

Mr. Briggs looked at them dully, and it was clear that he was engaged in his old pastime of getting intoxicated.

"Hev some fluid?" he added.

"Thanks, but I've just had a dose," Brown evasively replied.

"So've I," Briggs asserted; "hev had sev'ral on 'em. Goin' ter hev sev'ral more. Gents, you may not b'lieve it, but my legs is drunk. Solomcholy fact! General, my legs is intemp'rate; they will git full an' wobble. Now I never git full, but when my legs do, I'm helpless. Can't stan' up when my legs wobble, kin I?"

"Certainly not," Brown replied.

"Course I can't. My legs an' 'll quirril some day. They won't support me, my legs won't; an' I need ter be s'ported. Legs like mine is a nuisance, fur when they wobble, I fall. I'd like ter swap my legs off, but nobody 'll take 'em. I've got ter stick ter my legs, an' my legs ter me. Result, my legs will take another drink. Azonizin'ly dry, my legs be."

He raised the bottle and held it to his mouth, while a large quantity of the liquor gurgled down his throat. His queer words and ways made both Tim and Phil smile, but Briggs himself was a vile wretch who was killing himself with whisky.

"Ah!" he added, with a deep breath; "that's the stuff! My legs feel refreshed. My legs is good

judges o' liquor—kin tell jest how much p'ison is in a whisky-glass jest by the smell. Powerful on the smell, my legs be; but they *will* wobble!"

He paused, and all his eloquence suddenly departed. A second door of the room had opened, and Tip Higgins entered. His coming startled Briggs, who had been ordered not to drink, but for once Higgins was not thinking of his associate's weakness. He was looking at the visitors, and his face assumed an alarmed expression as he recognized Tim.

Brown stepped quickly forward.

"Higgins, you are my prisoner," he said, quietly.

The burglar made a quick turn and leap, trying to retrace his steps, but Brown caught him by the shoulder and whirled him around.

"Don't do it!" he coolly exclaimed.

Higgins jerked a revolver from his pocket and drew back the hammer, his eyes blazing.

One sweep of Brown's fist sent the weapon spinning across the room.

"I tell you, *don't do it*!" repeated the detective, with unflinching nonchalance.

Higgins stood still and glared at the speaker.

"I am here to arrest you in the name of the law, Higgins," Brown resumed. "Now don't try any more tricks."

Higgins, however, suddenly found his tongue.

"Help, hyar! This way, men! Help!"

The door was suddenly flung wide open, and two men sprung out. Then they, too, came to a halt, surprised at what they saw. The detective was another surprised person—very disagreeably surprised. He regretted now that he had not given more thought to Five Points Phil's suggestion; they had found more of the gang than he expected, just as Phil had hinted, and he now saw three men, besides drunken Abe Briggs, opposed to him.

His situation was precarious, and he might never leave the house alive.

His mind acted quickly in this emergency.

With a quick spring he gained Higgins's side, pushed him against the wall, twined around him like a serpent for a moment, and then—Higgins was handcuffed!

It had been done with almost incredible quickness, but the detective had had long years of experience.

Then the rage of the other men broke out. They realized the situation fully, and their hands were suddenly plunged into their pockets; but Brown was before them. He faced them, and a revolver glittered in each hand.

"Don't dare to draw a weapon!" he thundered.

"I am a detective, and I'll shoot you if you resist. Molest me, and you will get all the fight you want!"

"Right ye be!" echoed a sharp voice. "It's me-silf is hyar, too, an' I'm on de shoot!"

The speaker was Tim Thistle. He had secured Higgins's fallen revolver, and now took his stand beside Brown, ready for action. There was no revolver for Five Points Phil, but he caught up Briggs's bottle and flourished it wildly.

"Count me in likewise, by ginger! I've got a weep-on, arnd it's loaded. Don't know o' a weep-on that'll knock out more men than a pestiferous whisky-bottle. Assooredly not!"

Perhaps this army looked formidable to the roughs; at any rate, they suddenly abandoned their fighting scheme. Wheeling, they made a rush for the rear windows. There was a broad balcony outside, and as they were but one "story" above the ground, it flashed upon the detective that they intended to jump off, and make good their escape.

"Catch them!" he cried, springing forward.

One of the fugitives safely passed the window, but just as the second fellow tried to follow, Brown seized him.

Tim and Phil darted out upon the balcony. Just as they reached it the rough gave a leap and shot over. The rear yard was below, and the distance made it uncertain whether he would land with sound limbs or broken ones.

"Whoop!"

It was a cry from Tim Thistle, and showed a degree of excitement very unusual to his calm nature. As he spoke he laid one hand on the balcony railing and vaulted over after the fugitive. Phil was but an instant behind—both had taken the risky leap with reckless bravery.

The burglar had gone down in safety—arisen—started to flee—but just then Tim Thistle dropped upon his shoulders like a young catamount. Both fell, and the burglar was a good deal shaken up. Realizing the need of action, however, he staggered to his feet.

As he did so both Tim and Phil leaped upon him.

The big fellow uttered a roar of rage and tried to shake them off. He was in danger, and it made him exceedingly angry to be stopped by two boys. He thought to fling them away like ripe fruit, but they clung like burrs. He tried to strike them, but they nimbly dodged. Then Phil tripped him, and they went down in a heap.

A rough-and-tumble combat took place on the ground, and arms and legs flew about so profusely that it was hard to tell which was which. From out this confused knot the voice of Five Points Phil arose ever and anon.

"Surrender, ye pestiferous critter! Give it ter him, Tim! No quarter ter burglars! Wade in, Tim! Want ter run away, do ye, Mister Burglar? Want ter shirk the contrack with the State, do ye? Go it, Tim!"

Suddenly the burglar ceased fighting. He was panting like a hard-run dog.

"Let up, ye scoundrels!" he gasped. "I'll cave. Let up!"

They did not "let up" in the least, however. Both had provided themselves with cords, and they pro-

ceeded to tie the man's hands. This did not please him and he tried to fight again, but they had actually tired him out, and he was soon bound.

Just then Brown appeared on the balcony.

"How goes it?" he asked.

"De varmint is all ready fur yez," Tim answered.

"Yes, sirree," added Phil. "Trot out yer Sing Sing coop, and we'll give ye a passenger."

"One of you go through that alley and get a patrolman," the detective directed.

Tim Thistle obeyed this order and chanced to run upon two officers at once, one being a roundsman. They came to the rescue and the prisoners were gathered up. There were four in all, including Abe Briggs.

"You'll either hev ter excoose me or git a cab, gents," said that person. "Fack is, my legs is drunk. When they're that way they're stubborn, my legs be; they'll wobble like sixty. Gents, which is the offender—me or my legs? Ef it's my legs, take them an' leave me."

It was decided to take the whole of him, and in due time he and all the others were behind the bars. When Brown parted with Tim and Phil he thanked them warmly for their part in the late affray.

"You have proved yourselves heroes," he said, shaking them by the hand, "and you can count me your friend after this. I like nerry young fellows like you, and if you stick to the path of honesty you'll be a credit to New York. By George, yes! Now, boys, I'm off, for the last scenes in my detective case are about to occur!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A SERIES OF SURPRISES.

HARRY SHELBY was sitting alone in the parlor of his uncle's house when Brown was announced. The detective entered the room and Shelby was at once impressed by the grave expression on his face.

"Brown, is anything wrong?"

"We will see," was the evasive reply. "Where is Mr. Bainbridge?"

"In his room, but not iavisable to you. He said that he wished to be alone for a while, but if you came I was to bring you in at once. We will go. I trust there is no ill news in regard to Stella Fielding."

"Not a word, to my knowledge."

They were ascen ing the stairs, but Harry's steps were slow. He was beset with a vague yet painful presentiment that something terrible was about to occur. He would gladly have stopped, but went on reluctantly. He knocked at Mr. Bainbridge's door, but no answer was returned. He opened the door after repeated knocking; the gas was burning, but his uncle was not there.

Upon the table lay an envelope directed to himself. He tore it open. Within was a second sealed envelope and a scrap of paper on which was written this line:

"Open this when Brown comes; not before!"

Shelby glanced at the detective.

"Do you know what is in this envelope?" he asked, huskily.

"I suspect," Brown gravely replied. "Go on!"

Harry hesitated, and then tore it open. A sheet of paper, covered with writing in his uncle's hand, was before him. He read eagerly, yet with a sinking heart, and the pain grew sharper with each line that he read. The letter was as follows:

"MY DEAR HARRY:—When you have seen this you will probably know that I am Leonidas Palgrave, alias 'Captain Tiger.' If you do not know all then, let me say that, for years, while you were regarding me as an honest man, I have been a captain of burglars. I have no excuse to offer, for I can give no legitimate one. Let me briefly tell my melancholy story.

"Many years ago, when I was a young man, I fell in love with a girl named Dorothea Sykes. She was an innocent, noble girl, unlearned in the ways of the world, but a true woman. At that time, however, she was engaged to one Allan Fielding. Without going into details, let me say that I successfully schemed to part them; then won Dorothea's love; but almost in the hour of my triumph, I became engaged in a drunken broil and disgraced myself. I was discarded by her.

"Do not ask me to trace my downward career. I believe that, with me, crime was a mania. To-day people talk of 'kleptomaniacs.' I think I have been thus afflicted, but let me not try to excuse myself. I deserve no pity.

"What of the others I have mentioned? Miss Sykes has never married. I broke her heart, but she rallied, and is living a peaceful life. Allan Fielding, her former lover, long remained single, but finally married Agatha Templeton, a niece of Miss Sykes, and Stella Fielding is the daughter of that marriage. Perhaps you wonder at my interest in her. All this was the result of an awakened conscience—if I may say so. She was the daughter of the man I had wronged. I have done what I could by paying off the mortgage on Fielding's farm. Let him not hesitate to avail himself of my act—the money used in the case was honest money, not the proceeds of burglary.

"Before you read this I think I shall be on my way to Europe. I know that Brown, the detective, is slowly unmasking me; I must flee. Stella Fielding's jewels have ruined me. My men stole them—Brown will tell you how—and I sold them to a 'fence.' He removed the settings of the few diamonds in the lot, and sold them to the bogus 'importer.' Brown will explain fully.

"When you first spoke of the 'importer' I did not hear the steps of Nemesis; I had never known, or heard of the importer. Curiously enough, when I hired Brown, I hired a man to hunt me down. His own words, his pointed questions and remarks—

gave me the clew. He did this knowingly; he asked if he should stop or go on. I said, 'Go on,' though well aware that it meant ruin to me.

"Unless I am arrested, I shall soon be on the ocean. You will never see me again; never again hear from me. If you can, think kindly of my better qualities; there was some good in me. If you can, pity me for my weaknesses; I have suffered more from them than any one else. The brown-stone house I lately showed you I have made legally yours. Take it—honest money bought it. The same assertion will apply to the good-sized deposit in the ——— Bank, in your name. Only this house remains of the fruits of my crime; I take the rest with me in my flight. I advise you not to try and hold this house.

"If you can find the courage to do it, think with some forbearance of the misguided man who here, for the last time, writes his real name.

"ELBERT BAINBRIDGE."

"I'd like to know why that boy don't come!" declared Miss Frazer, belligerently. "It is very strange, indeed, but it is all because he is a boy. He is a young viper, and, by and by, he will be an old viper. He will grow up and be like all his sex, a persecutor of sweet Woman. Oh! the monster, Man, has many sins to answer for!"

And the disciple of Woman's Rights moved her cane fiercely, thrusting out, with it as though she was impaling the monster, Man, on the glittering spike.

"But," said Miss Sykes, gently, "you have not yet seen the ring; it may not be yours."

"It is mine; an amethyst ring, with the mark 'A to A,' inside the gold hoop. Of course it's mine, but shall I ever see it? Nobody can tell; that boy has it, and not one of the male sex can be depended upon, except when they seek to grind poor Woman into the dust."

And Miss Frazer impaled a few more imaginary male monsters on her terrible spiked cane.

She and Mr. Maudston were in Miss Sykes's room. The harpies had again met by chance, and, as each was after a check, they were glaring at each other belligerently.

As Miss Frazer ceased speaking Five Points Phil walked in with a jaunty air.

"Ah! there he is!" cried the woman. "There is the future viper! Boy, where is my ring?"

"Hello, Miss Blazer, that you? Great ginger, mum, I'm right glad ter see ye. I'm filled with exstastic joy, b'gosh!"

"Boy, I ask you—where is my ring?" and her voice grew to be something terribly inexorable.

"Oh! jest so. Nigh forgot it. Fax is fax, and they're stubborn things. Is this your ring, Miss Blazer?"

"Don't dare call me 'Blazer!' My name is Cynthia Ann Frazer, boy. Yes, that's my ring; of course it's my ring."

"Make dead sure afore ye claim it."

"Hal! do you tell me what to do? Infant monster that you are, I will not bear it. You want to grind me in the dust under your foot, but you can't. Yes, it is my ring; I can swear to that."

"Then, madam, you're my prisoner!"

The words fell upon her ears with startling force. She sprung to her feet. Before her stood a large, official-looking man with a stern countenance. It was Brown.

"I am a detective, Miss Frazer," he coolly said, "and I arrest you in the name of law. You ought to have been arrested long ago, for you have aided your brother, the notorious receiver of stolen goods, to pass off his ill-gotten articles. You have had a pretty fair run as a criminal, madam, as criminals go, but you are now at the end of your rope."

Miss Frazer sunk into her chair again, speechless for the first time in fifty-five years.

"I expected this," said Seth Maudston, in a solemn whine. "Miss Sykes, have I not always gently intimated to you that that creature was an evil character? The shadowy cause she served never deserved all the money you have put out."

"A marn may smile, and be a villain still," declared Five Points Phil, shaking his finger at Maudston. "Brown, hadn't ye better call in the rest? The menagerie is hot arnd still a-heatin', arnd we warnt all the fun we kin. I'll bring in Lunkhead, the Crew-slayer arnd Jawer in the Dark."

He did so, while the detective opened the hall door and admitted Stella Fielding and Tim Thistle. At sight of his niece Mr. Maudston first looked surprised, and then glanced at Brown in alarm.

"I see that you catch on, Maudston," said the detective. "You are arrested for stealing Miss Fielding's jewels!"

"I," gasped the high official of the A. P. C. C.

"Yes."

"But I never touched them—"

"The proof is complete—overwhelming. You stole them; they were put in Miss Sykes's safe; burglars directed by one Captain Tiger stole them from the safe; Captain Tiger sold them to a receiver of stolen goods; the latter sold three of the diamonds to a bogus 'importer'; the importer sold them to Harry Shelby; and Harry gave them to Stella. That's what became of the three diamonds. Here in my hand is another of the jewels; an amethyst ring. The receiver of stolen goods before mentioned gave it to his sister, Miss Frazer, for her to work off. You have not profited much by the robbery, Maudston, I must say."

Perspiration was pouring off Maudston's face.

"I am innocent!" he cried. "I swear—"

"I wouldn't, if I were you," Brown dryly replied. "To satisfy your craving mind, I'll tell you just how you did the job. It was at your suggestion—almost command—that Stella brought the jewels to New

York in a basket. This article you sent her, giving her minute directions not to cover it over with paper. At the time you bought the basket, you also bought a second one.

"When you met her at the Grand Central and helped her into the cab, she gave you the basket for a moment. You deftly changed it for the other, and gave her the empty one. What next? You had Derriby, your private detective, close at hand, disguised so that he looked exactly like you. It was he, not you, who mounted the box beside the driver.

"You took another cab, drove rapidly down-town to Miss Sykes's house, and asked permission to put a package in her safe for a few days. She gave the permission, little suspecting the truth. Then you hastened back to the grocery store, and when Derriby sent the driver in, you exchanged places with him again.

"Your absence had not been discovered, and you then accompanied Miss Fielding to your house, where the basket was opened—the second basket—and found to be vacant. By the way, the large picture you had in the cab that night, was only a device so that your confederate could ride outside the vehicle.

"Your plot, Maudston, elaborate as it was, was clumsy, and you owe it to luck that it succeeded as well as it did. The course of affairs, I must say, was peculiar. You dared not keep the stolen jewels in your possession, and you thought no one would look in Miss Sykes's safe. You knew she was honest. But burglars took them, and some wandered back within seventeen days to their proper owner. The rest I have recovered.

"Maudston, your wife is half-sister of Stella's father. Knowing their financial straits as you did, I must say that you are an infernal scoundrel to steal the poor child's jewels!"

Miss Frazer seemed suddenly galvanized into life. She sprung to her feet and waved her cane until the spike glittered balefully and marvelously.

"So I am 'an evil creature,' am I?" she cried, shrilly, menacing Maudston. "Oh! you mendacious viper! you are arrested now, ain't you? I'm glad of it—glad of it! Oh! you cried goodness, didn't you? and then robbed your niece."

"You can't say much; you robbed Miss Sykes," surlily replied Maudston.

"Did you?"

"What if I did?"

"What if you did? Oh! you monster, I'd like to get at you and tear your hair!" shouted Miss Frazer.

"Don't try it. I don't want to hurt an old woman who is so near Methuselah's age as you are."

This was the last feather on the camel's back. Miss Frazer flung her spiked cane at Maudston, and would have followed it to wreck that monster, Man, but Mr. Brown quietly slipped irons upon her and made her sit down.

"You'd oughter let 'em have a few rounds, Mr. Detective," said Phil.

"I believe I owe my downfall to that villainous boy!" said Maudston, savagely.

"He has done a bit that way, but here is another boy of the same kind—Tim Thistle, the Tartar. Maudston, the night that you stole the jewels, and Derriby took your place, the cab had a collision with another vehicle. Tim was just passing, and he saw something queer. He saw one of the men nearly lose off a wig, and under that wig—worn by Derriby to look like you—showed thick, red hair, which was Derriby's own.

"Tim Thistle saw that, and ultimately told me of it, and it helped me a good deal to run you down. Tim has done a pile in this case. He it was who, masquerading as a hand-organ player, was able to track Captain Tiger home and learn just who he was. I had the clew, but young Tim hastened my work. He's a brick!"

"I niver knew afore what made me hair rid," said the Tartar, dryly.

"We can't all be pooty like Mudstone arnd Miss Blazer, yer know," said Five Points Phil, "arnd me arnd you must put up with our infirmities. Timothy T. See Lunkhead, the Crew-slayer, a-smilin' at yer! He don't keer fur pooty faces. Mr. Brown, sir, thar's a cat that can't be ekulled in Gotham—kind, gentle, well broke ter harness, warranted not ter kick or balk, and a pestiferous critter ter fight when he gits his back up. But he's honest, Lunkhead is, arnd ef all was like him that way we needn't hev no asylums fur his race, nur no printed ballots framed. The long arnd short on't is, ef folkses will be villains, they'll git inter some pestiferous scrape. They will, by ginger!"

The curtain falls; the drama is past. What of the actors?

Maudston, Higgins, Briggs, the rest of the burglars, and Derriby, the private detective, are in prison, serving appropriate terms. So is Miss Frazer. Jed Jackley escaped with a light sentence.

He who was once "Captain Tiger" is never heard from. He escaped the grasp of law, and is probably a wanderer in foreign lands.

Miss Sykes is living her old, placid life, surrounded by Tancred, the Crusader, and her other pets. She has made a will, giving all her property to Stella, but does not care to change her mode of living. Stella, by the way, is now Mrs. Harry Shelby, and they consider themselves the happiest of married couples.

Detective Brown thought of taking Tim Thistle and Five Points Phil as pupils in his business, but both declined. Tim is learning the trade of an engineer, and expects some day to run a stationary engine in the city of New York.

Phil is now back at school, but retains his aversion to "pestiferous critters," and lets no chance pass to interfere with the schemes of dishonest persons.

THE END.

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